The re-invention of traditional weaving in Saudi Arabia

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The Re-Invention of Traditional Weaving in Saudi Arabia

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Laila Mohammed N. Salaghor

The Re-Invention of Traditional Weaving in Saudi Arabia

(Under the direction of Jill Journeaux, Imogen Racz, Karen Ross, and Imogen Aust)

Abstract

This research seeks to create new woven artefacts by integrating elements of traditional weaving from western Saudi Arabia and different kinds of materials for the warp, thus offering a new dimension to the field of hand weaving in Saudi society, and contributing to its development.

For the researcher's MA study, she was interested in western modern weaving and textiles in terms of its new weave techniques, methods, forms, design and function. But, with the commencement of her PhD study, she thought more about Saudi traditional weaving as a key reference. Her interest developed when she worked as a weaver and teacher of the art. Through work experience, the researcher has observed that the field of hand weaving in Saudi Arabia, particularly the traditional Bedouin approach, is rich in aesthetic values and techniques, but is not widespread. Some effort is required to find ways to develop this kind of weaving and to introduce the new forms, appearance and techniques to Saudi Arabian society. At the same time, this might be considered an invitation to Saudi weavers to join the researcher in reclaiming our past to suit the needs of the present time.

The terms 'rug' and 'carpet' can not be used to describe Bedouin woven artefacts, because traditionally, Bedouin women weavers wove different items for their own needs and others for sale. These included tents of hair and other domestic accessories, such as bean bags, coffeepot holders, cushions, blankets and so on. This kind of weaving employed materials obtained from the local context, such as animal fibres, natural dyes, simple wooden tools for carding and spinning threads and a wooden or metal ground loom for weaving. These woven artefacts were decorated with geometrical patterns and colourful yarns.

Traditional weaving, particularly that of large woven items, such as rugs and divided curtains, has disappeared along with other crafts. This happened because of the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s and the industrial revolution which followed. Industrialisation in Saudi Arabia has had a negative impact on crafts, because Bedouin weavers, who were considered professionals, gave up their work when they moved to urban areas where the need for these kinds of products diminished. Oil revenue and the cultural revolution brought the motor vehicle, and imported products were more easily obtained and were available in different forms. This sounded the death knell for handcrafts, as the lives of the Bedouin changed in many ways.

There are no parallels between Saudi Arabia and other countries with respect to industrialisation. For instance, in Jordan, the researcher found that Bedouin weavers still produced traditional woven items in an attempt to preserve their tradition. At the same time, they tried to introduce weaving of new form and appearance, despite and alongside the industrial revolution which was taking place there. This goal was achieved by designers who were responsible for designing woven images or decorative patterns in association with Bedouin weavers. Although they still use raw materials, they add other materials to the surface of the woven object, such as shells, buttons and pieces of ceramic or metal, or use embroidery techniques, in order to add aesthetic and artistic value to their woven items.

In contrast, in the late twentieth century, the field of weaving in Arab or western countries began to see changes in form, design and materials used. Woven artefacts seemed to have undergone a transformation, images changed from figurative to abstract, two-dimensional forms to sculptural shape, and wall items to free-standing pieces. Power looms and computers are used in order to design images and facilitate the rapid production of artefacts. New types of synthetic threads in different colours, textures, and thickness became available, in addition to the use of different kinds of non-fibrous materials, such as corn husks, seed pods, horsehair, seaweed and feathers, in order to achieve the expression the weaver sought. So, not only was the consciousness of weavers or textile artists changing, but there was a deeper understanding of materials, together with a freer and more sophisticated technical ability.

The three key themes of this study are: traditional Bedouin weaving in the western region of Saudi Arabia, contemporary weaving, and how a new form of weaving can be produced through the use of new and unconventional materials. To cover these areas, a major study based on a theoretical and practical programme was undertaken.

The theoretical framework focused on an investigation of Saudi traditional weaving, in order to develop a deeper understanding of its weave structures and methods, decorative patterns and the designs that characterised Bedouin weaving. This was undertaken through:

- Literature reviews, books, articles, and journals concerned with traditional weaving.
- Interviews with Bedouin weavers in their dwellings in the western region of Saudi Arabia.
- Visiting the Centre of Tradition and Bedouin markets in the Makkah and Al-Taif cities.
- Studying and investigating selected woven objects as examples of traditional Bedouin weaving.

In addition the researcher studied the artefacts of contemporary Arab and western weavers whose works are relevant to her subject, in order to understand how materials, techniques, and modern theory affected the shape and weave. This work was undertaken through interviews with Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian, and British weavers, either in their workshops or at public exhibitions. Besides this, she investigated relevant literature concerning modernity in the field of craft in general, and weaving in particular.

As a practitioner, the researcher understands the phase of production is a result of information gathered and reflected upon in the way that Schon describes (1983). The practical work comprised a number of woven artefacts, each piece using different kinds of unconventional materials, with a combination of weave structures and decorative patterns inspired by traditional Bedouin weaving, in order to examine their potential for use as the warp.

Theoretical and practical results emerged from this study. From a theoretical point of view, new insights included:

- The structures used to weave geometrical patterns.
- The technique of chaining structure.
- The technique of bead weaving.
- The use of cloth strips for the weft.

The outcomes of the creative work, obtained from the feedback of visitors to her show, are as follows:

- The woven artefacts evolved from an understanding of original traditional Bedouin weaving and are an experiment in the possible use of unconventional materials for the warp, which could provide new artefacts relevant to the requirements of a contemporary culture.
- The method and technique used in the practical work could develop the field of hand weaving in Saudi Arabia, especially with regard to Bedouin or contemporary weavers and students of art education departments in Saudi Universities. The experiment with different materials and techniques will stimulate their imagination and encourage them to think, choose and experiment in order to find a new artistic vision for materials and techniques used.

The new woven artefacts produced by the researcher could be used for a decorative rather than a functional purpose, and for exhibition. As well as producing work for exhibition, she accepts commissions from individuals, architects and interior designers.

In conclusion, the researcher believes that it is important to consider the contribution that studies and experiments could make to the field of hand crafts in Saudi Arabia, particularly traditional Bedouin weaving. We can learn from the experience of others - such as the Craft Council in the UK, Nour Al-Housinn Institution (Bani Hamida Women's weaving Project) in Jordan, and Wissa Wassif Art School in Egypt - how to revive and develop this kind of weaving, and at the same time help people to reconnect with the roots of their tradition and culture in a way that is appropriate to the global

changes in the culture. In this way and others, (see chapter 2, section 2.3) we can promote hand weaving in Saudi society instead of losing it.

DEDICATION

The researcher dedicates this dissertation to those whom she will never forget, her mother, father, aunt, and oldest sister. They enlightened her in the ways of knowledge, and are dear to the researcher's heart, but the Lord did not intend them to be with her until the end. Also to her husband, who is generous, patient, and does much for her, but demands no thanks, and to the researcher's children, who love her but for whom she has had little time during the period of her study as a PhD student. They have suffered, missing their hometown, relatives and best friends.

Acknowledgment

The researcher would like to express her deep appreciation and thanks to the following people. Their assistance and encouragement have sustained her in achieving this substantial dissertation.

Her deepest thanks to Professor, J. Journeaux, and special votes of thanks to Dr. I. Racz, Professor K. Ross, and Ms. I. Aust. Their constructive support and unerring instruction have contributed to the preparation and completion of this project, and have helped to bring this dissertation into being. They were good masters, carrying out their tasks with generosity.

Words alone can not convey the researcher's thanks to her husband, Hamza Oraif, daughters Alaa and Shaimaa, and her son Ibrahim. They have always helped and supported the researcher whilst she worked on her project, and offered encouragement and solace when her work seemed as if it would never fall into an organised and cohesive dissertation.

Special thanks to Professor Wedadd Abdul-Haliem, who has always believed in her and saw in the researcher a potential that she did not see in herself, and to her schoolmate and best friend Faredah Al-Murahhem, whose valuable support and encouragement have meant so much.

The researcher's gratitude to everyone who helped her through her studies at the University of Umm Al- Qura in Saudi Arabia and at the University of Coventry; also to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Embassy, the Saudi Aramco Office in London, and the Crafts Council in the UK, whose efforts and cooperation were highly appreciated, as they provided the researcher with the names and addresses of the British weavers. Also, her primary indebtedness goes to Arab and British weavers, who provided her with photos and an explanation of their work.

And finally, with great affection, very special thanks go to the researcher’s brothers, sisters, and relatives. You have always encouraged her in so many ways, and your support on this dissertation was deeply appreciated.

Laila Salaghor

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PhD THESIS

This thesis documents the work the researcher has accomplished at PhD level, and the research programme she undertook. It consists of four chapters. Each chapter is divided into main sections and sub-sections relevant to the key themes of the research, and includes a reflection of her practical work (see diagram 1). The researcher's approach as a practitioner and the progress she has made against her creative work are discussed as follows:

- The first chapter is concerned with the dimensions and limitations of the study.
- The second chapter aims to establish a contextual framework. It is divided into five sections. In this chapter, after the introduction, the work is contextualised through a review of relevant studies which are concerned with traditional weaving, traditional methods of weaving and materials and processes. The section of investigation into the traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia is commenced by an introduction to the research area, a definition of traditional Bedouin weaving and then its weave structure and decorative patterns. The importance of modernity in contemporary weaving is considered. This section is followed by studying the new and unconventional materials. The conclusion is the last section in the chapter.
- The third chapter is entitled 'The Application of Reflective Practice and Documentation of the Practical Work'. This chapter commences with the introduction, and then the researcher's background. This is followed by a consideration of the researcher's approach to her practice, and then the practical work is documented. In this chapter, the conclusion is the last section.
- Chapter four is the final chapter. It includes the results of this study and its contribution to knowledge and future work. This chapter is followed by the reference and appendixes.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

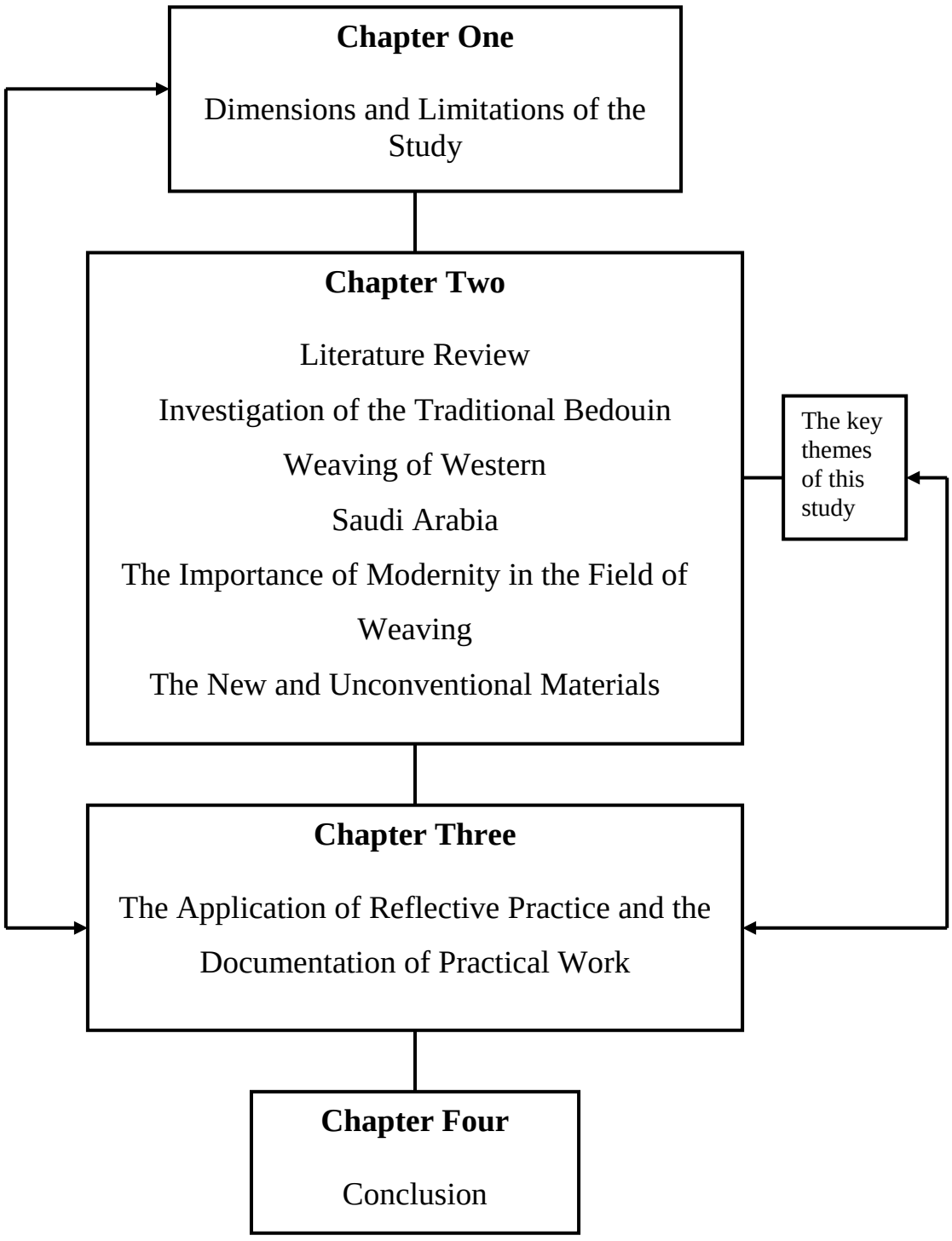


Diagram 1

CHAPTER ONE

DIMENSIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

1.2 Objective, Significance and Limitation of the Study

1.3 Research Methodology

1.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

The initial experience of the researcher as a teacher of hand weaving and as a textile artist, was of traditional techniques and styles. However, during her Master's research she decided to go beyond these limitations. For her MA project she changed her approach and created two-dimensional hangings that experimented with texture, whilst at the same time making a link between the field of hand weaving and relief techniques (Salaghor, 1997:4). To achieve this, synthetic threads of different textures and thicknesses were used within different weave structures that were created on a specially-made metal hand loom. The significance of her findings was three-fold. Firstly, she realised how creative skills could be developed. Secondly, there were principles and rules underpinning high and low-relief structures which could be understood, and thirdly, the relationship between weaving and the broader visual arts could also be realised. These factors can activate and stimulate the imagination and contribute to developments in the education of students of art education. After her MA graduation, she worked as a textile artist and participated in various public exhibitions of plastic art in Saudi Arabia (see her CV in appendix H).

The idea of applying unconventional materials to the field of hand weaving occurred to the researcher whilst working as a lecturer in the Art Education department at the University of Oum Al-Qura in Saudi Arabia. She observed students working with waste and discarded materials to produce craft objects on a recycling project. This idea, which linked with her memory of a Bedouin woman weaver who often came to stay in her family house in the winter, remained dormant for several years until the researcher started her PhD project. Then the researcher remembered her initial fascination with the Bedouin woman's woven objects, in terms of their bright colours, decorative patterns and weave structures. This woman used to spin and dye the wools, and then stretched the ground loom to produce woven items for her daily life in the village, which was located to the south of Al-Taif city in western Saudi Arabia. Sometimes, she would sell her products to other Bedouin in her village. She had not learnt her craft through higher education, but it was something that had been passed to her in an organic fashion, through generations of practice. Weaving was an integral part of her life, and provided

her with necessary items. Because her weaving was part of a common practice, the techniques and styles were similar to other traditional woven materials from the region (see appendix A).

In the intervening years, owing to the discovery of oil and the consequent growth in industrialisation, this production of crafts to meet needs, together with the use of indigenous materials and techniques, had virtually ceased. In museums there are a few examples of traditional Bedouin weaving, in particular small and delicate objects like pot holders, coffee-bean bags and face masks. Shoubraa Palace at Al-Taif City does have a few examples of these, but institutional exposure is small in Saudi Arabia. Other traditional hand-made objects like baskets or men's traditional sandals (see appendix F), are not represented at all. Knowledge and production of these is greater than that of traditional weaving, as there are more practitioners and more of theses objects are sold in markets. However, there are no shops that sell Bedouin weaving, so knowledge about this is limited, even in Saudi Arabia.

Not only is there a general lack of representation in the museums and in knowledge on the subject, but also the practice of Bedouin weaving has died out in western Saudi Arabia. In traditional Bedouin weaving, the goods produced reflected a nomadic lifestyle. Because they were always on the move, they used a tent as their home and light, woven bags to accommodate their food and valuables (Badour, 1996:22*)*. Naturally, they were reliant on being able to obtain the necessary materials to carry out their weaving. As a result of the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia and the subsequent industrial revolution, the lifestyle of the Bedouin has changed dramatically. Consequently, these woven objects are no longer required and so traditional Bedouin weaving has disappeared (Badour, 1996:89*)*. This situation has been confirmed by both Topham (1987:35) and Fayoumy (2000:50), who commented that with the arrival of mass-production in the last few decades, traditional objects became obsolete as people's lives changed. The old-fashioned and the inconvenient became uncommon. Fayoumy questions whether the Bedouins have reached a breaking point in a long tradition, and whether this has resulted in a loss of their identity, but the decline in traditional weaving does not, in itself, spell a loss of identity. They still preserve the customs and habits which are considered central to their character, such as generosity, hospitality and

independence, but have tried to change their way of life for one that is more comfortable. In short, they have adapted their lives to those of city dwellers, just as their parents and forefathers adapted to the changing circumstances of the arid steppes and deserts in the past. What is different is the speed of these changes.

Our industrial revolution and the loss of interest in hand-made work has parallels in other countries, both western and Arabian. In some, there have been a number of studies and experiments to help preserve and find new roles for crafts, which, as yet, are lacking in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, there has been a revival in interest in traditional weaving in other industrialised countries in recent years (The Scottish Arts Council, 1980:9). As the researcher is studying in the UK, which is more culturally diverse than her country, she has become more knowledgeable about recent developments in hand weaving and other crafts, as well as the impact of global changes upon them.

Just as in Saudi Arabia, the industrial revolution in Europe had a profound impact on crafts. William Morris, like many of the intellectuals of the nineteenth century, wanted to preserve crafts, as he felt that industrialisation had severed the link between art and life. Morris was opposed to mass-production, not only because of the inferiority of the products, but because of the appalling conditions that were normal for most factory workers. If more time were taken on quality production, he argued, and people were happy to buy at a reasonable cost, then all could live in conditions that were decent and fair, and could work in harmony with nature (Morris, 1974: 494-526). These ideas were later articulated by Eric Gill. In his many essays he espoused anti-industrial ideals, paraphrasing Lethaby when he wrote that “art is the well-making of what is needed” and that a maker of a teapot contributes towards a good life (Gill, 1944/1977:113-121). Part of being human, he wrote was making a mark, not in a way that is in pursuit of riches, but in one that enriches the soul and leads to peace (Gill, 1944/1977:128-134 and 142-147). Like Morris, he linked this to nature, which he felt penetrated everything (Gill, 1944/ 1977:35).

As a result of Morris’ ideas, many middle class men in England migrated to the country in the first part of the twentieth century in order to live at one with nature and produce crafts by hand. They were the first wave of newcomers and had a curious social status

that was neither the same as artisan craftsmen nor the traditional outlook of the middle classes (Sarsby, 1997:391). These newcomers, including the furniture makers Ernest Gimson and Sidney and Ernest Barnsley, the textile maker Ethel Mairet, the metal worker Ashbee and the ceramicists Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew, suggested an alternative way of life and encouraged a repopulation of the countryside (Sarsby, 1997:391).

However, these people were running against the grain of modernism, where making by hand was considered reactionary. When Gimson and the Barnsleys, for instance, moved to the South Cotswolds in the early part of the twentieth century, the lure of industrial products and rural poverty meant that the local crafts network had all but disappeared. There was also little general interest in buying hand-made crafts. Sidney Barnsley attempted to dissuade his son Edward from making furniture, saying that he would not be able to make a success of it (Barnsley, 1993/1994:13). It was not until the late 1960s that there was a resurgence of interest in hand-made objects in England.

Since the craft revival of the 1970s in England, there has been a move away from craft being regarded as just functional, towards a broader definition of purpose and style. This in turn led to a freedom in forms, designs, techniques and materials. Weaving can now be functional and traditional, as in the work of Alison Morton, experimental in terms of materials, like the work of Michael Brennand-Wood, or use computers in the design, as in the work of Ann Sutton, who attaches her loom to her Apple Mac (Dormer, 1997:170).

Returning to Saudi Arabia, in the second half of the twentieth century a new field of hand weaving in Arab countries was developed, using synthetic materials which combine traditional fibres with non-traditional fibres and threads, and different techniques, such as embroidery, lace or Ikat with weaving, for variety in the creation of artistic artefacts. This has resulted in new artistic values, which enrich the work (Sultan, 1996:2). From interviews with Egyptian contemporary textile artists the researcher found that most of their woven artefacts were produced from synthetic materials. For example, Al-Kauass has used cotton threads for the warp and cellophane paper and synthetic wool threads for the weft.

Jordan has seen a resurgence of interest in Bedouin weaving. Bedouin weavers still practice their hand weaving crafts and try to develop their products in a manner that suits the needs of an urban society, in terms of colour, form and design. According to M. J. Abou-Alaa (personal communication, August 22, 2003), to make woven objects, they use raw materials like sheep's wool in combination with different techniques, such as embroidery, or they add shells, plastic buttons and pieces of copper or ceramic to the surface of the weaving after it is complete.

Also, through the visits of the researcher to institutions and organisations, such as the Bani Hamida Weaving Project, north of Amman City, the Nour Al-Housinn Queen's Institution, The Jordan Design and Trade Centre in Amman, and the Rimoun Weaving Project at Jarash city of Jordan, it is understood that the crafts in Jordan have only been kept alive through the establishment of these institutions, which are interested in preserving all kinds of traditional crafts, including hand weaving. These institutions work in association with craftsmen and women in a way that develops and maintains their tradition, while at the same time contributing to the family incomes of Jordanian weavers (personal communication, August 23, 2003). The process of production is divided into two stages. The first is concerned with designers, who concentrate only on designs that suit the form and function of the weaving. Sometimes, the costumer controls the process by deciding everything related to the piece of weaving, and then the designer is involved in drawing up an appropriate design. After completion, the design is sent to Bedouin weavers, with a list of all the technical and material requirements. The weaver then follows the design, according to the Jordanian designer's instructions (personal communication, August 24, 2003). This contrasts with the experiments with new materials in Egypt, where the form of work has become free and modern and is regulated more by aesthetic than functional consideration. Varied contemporary work has been produced through the use of different materials and techniques and, as a result, weaving has made a dramatic comeback (personal communication with Egyptian weavers, July 28, 2003).

Taking these examples into consideration, there are a few pertinent aspects which are relevant to the researcher's study. English crafts nearly died out through the fashion for and experience of mass-produced objects. Whilst the researcher neither suggests that a

crafts revival in Saudi Arabia should be linked with social revolution, as Morris believed, or that there should be stylistic nostalgia, the retention of the link with tradition and the discipline-led skills had to be kept alive in order for the English craft revival of the 1970s to come about. Jordan has kept tradition alive through institutional interest, whilst Egypt has allowed weaving to become more free and inventive.

In contrast, Saudi traditional hand weaving has declined rapidly, even though this kind of weaving is rich with aesthetic values. More interest needs to be taken in it, at both an institutional level and in relation to practice. The researcher's interviews with Bedouin weavers in their villages, particularly the new generation of Bedouin people, revealed that besides the discovery of oil, the industrial revolution and the changes in their lifestyle, the difficulty of preparing threads or fibres and the process of weaving were considered major reasons for giving up their craft (outcomes of interviews with Saudi weavers). It takes effort and time to make their traditional wares, and what they need can now be bought easily.

The researcher's appreciation and passion for the traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia, together with the realisation that it is disappearing, led her to think seriously about how this could be developed in a way that would be relevant for today's urbanised society. The researcher decided to search for and experiment with unconventional materials to see if these materials have a place within woven artefacts which follow the tradition of Saudi weaving. It was found that there are parallels between this idea and work from the Gobelins workshop in France. Here, the weavers experimented with the traditional technique known as *hatching*, which was then tested to produce a textile relief, such as *The Triptych* by Guitet. Thus, in 1969, an experimental workshop was established for weavers who were interested in developing new techniques (The Scottish Arts Council, 1980:11). This, together with the examples from Jordan and Egypt, has encouraged her to try to develop traditional Bedouin craft into something new. The researcher wanted to discover whether a connection could be made between the traditional qualities of the past and the freshness of the new modernity. In particular, she wanted to see whether using a wide range of unconventional materials for the warp, and synthetic yarns for the weft, could be combined successfully with other elements of traditional weaving, such as weave

structures and decorative patterns. Through these means, the researcher wanted to see whether these new objects that referenced the past would then be relevant products for the new urban society.

Many contemporary weavers have used different materials in combination with raw or synthetic fibres. Regensteiner, in her book *The Art of Weaving* (1981:35) argues that the hand weaver can successfully use natural materials, such as stalks of dried plants and flowers, twigs and grasses, in addition to fibres and yarns. As the researcher's own work is based on the use of unconventional materials to produce woven artefacts, she found that a link existed between her practice and Regensteiner's argument. She believes that experimenting with different materials will stimulate the imagination and encourage Saudi weavers to think, choose and experiment in order to find a new artistic vision for the materials used. However, Regensteiner's argument offered the researcher the opportunity to explain her point of view with regard to the use of unconventional materials, whether natural, synthetic, conventional or non-traditional. In her creative work, the researcher has used materials that are considered new in Saudi Arabian hand weaving, and particularly to traditional Bedouin weaving.

Clearly there is a difference in the purpose of traditional weaving and the researcher's woven artefacts. Previously, traditional woven objects had a utilitarian function in the Bedouin context, as they were crucial items for their daily lives. The researcher's creative work is decorative and intended to be seen both in new urban homes and in exhibition galleries. Having a new purpose, and therefore a new market, her objects and ideas will contribute to the development of hand weaving in Saudi Arabia.

The researcher's woven artefacts are hand-made. This is important for her and also, she believes, for society. In Mitchell's book *The Beauty of Craft* (2004), she discusses the relationship between the society that becomes materialistic and passionate about mass production and that which values hand-made objects. She argues that in a hand made object, we can realise that there is some thing beyond the work, which explores the experience of the maker. The act of making, in itself, can become a channel of engagement between oneself and the world (Mitchell, 2004:11). The researcher believes that hand-made work offers the maker meditation and self-fulfilment. When the work is

made by machine, it suffers both in terms of material and spiritual benefits. Paul Greenhalgh (1997:108) articulates the opinion that hand-made things are more beautiful than machine made ones. His point of view is based on the need to assert the primacy of human skill over the machine, as the aesthetic value of a product has been affected by machinery, and this in turn leads to the poverty of beauty, style and execution. This idea is sustained by Sandy Brown, who comments that (2004:8) "we can see and touch the feeling, love and joy of the maker in his work, because he/she deals with selected material directly and in an intimate affinity". John Seymour (1984:6) also argues against mass-produced objects, in terms of quality and material. He describes these products as ugly and lacking in beauty, even though they do their jobs perfectly well. Although machine work has made our life easy and comfortable, we believe that only the human hand and brain can give the unique aesthetic and emotional feel to an object (Ress, 2004:102). While some machines can be used in production, the maker needs to have the ultimate control (Livingston, 2002:37).

The researcher would like to argue that hand-made objects have three crucial and related factors: the maker, the process and the final object, all of which can be appreciated by the audience. However, mass-produced objects are designed to be made as multiples, and so are restricted by the costs of tooling and fashion. Ultimately, they are concerned with the creation of profit. This is close to what Mitchell argues. She says that these products tend to have their original nature destroyed and smoothed out, without any of their unique and natural character remaining (Mitchell, 2004:11). In the end, the mass-productions become objects of utility and design, rather than being created organically.

All of these aspects encouraged the researcher to look at the use of unconventional materials to create new products or art works influenced by the traditional weaving of western Saudi Arabia. This study is undertaken to further the understanding of traditional weaving, and how it can be developed in a way that accommodates changing needs, through the introduction of new materials and techniques that make it possible for the resultant creative weaving to be used and exploited in the visual arts.

1.2 Objectives, Significance and Limitations of the Study

Traditionally, weaving is formed by the interlacing of warp and weft threads passed over and under one another in different directions, according to the kind of weave structure. Usually, cotton, raw or synthetic wool or silk threads are used for the warps and the wefts in a woven object. However, the main goal of this study is to experiment with the potential for using different kinds of material to alter the warp and the weft and to create new woven artefacts that are influenced by the traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia. The outcomes of this study will acknowledge a desire to develop the field of hand weaving. Specific objectives are (see diagram 1):

- To contribute to the preservation and development of the traditional weaving which is disappearing from western Saudi Arabia, by introducing new forms that draw on traditional values.
- To find a new use for unconventional materials that adds a new vision to the field of hand weaving.
- To use unconventional materials to produce modern woven artefacts that enrich the aesthetic and artistic values of woven objects influenced by traditional weaving.

The significance of the research is defined in the following questions:
Are the changes which occurred in nomadic life, because of the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia, the main reason for the decline and disappearance of traditional Bedouin weaving? Also, will the use of a new technique in this kind of weaving contribute to its development and revival?

By asking these questions, it was found that the following points explain the significance of the study:

- It will stimulate weavers and students of art to search for new materials and design ideas.
- It will provide an exploration of traditional weaving, and its evolution in Saudi Arabia, producing valuable documentation on what is at the moment, a dying tradition.

- It will explore the potential for using unconventional materials within traditional Bedouin weaving, and show how these can be used in practice.
- The works produced and their methods of production will contribute to the revival of hand weaving in general, and traditional weaving in particular, in Saudi Arabia.

The limitations of the study are that:

- It is concerned solely with Bedouin weaving in the western region of Saudi Arabia, in terms of its technical methods and format structures.
- The practical work of this project focuses on the researcher's own experiments, associated with the aims of this study, to produce new woven artefacts.

1.3 Research Methodology

The overall research methodology is one of creative production, which is based on Schon's (1983) theory of reflective practice (Scrivener, 2000:1). It involves an interactive cycle of production, reflection and knowledge gathering, which is preceded by a major phase of knowledge gathering.

This research will follow two broad lines of investigation within an academic framework: the theoretical and practical. Three areas will be investigated in the theoretical section: Saudi traditional weaving, contemporary weaving and unconventional materials. Literature and state of the art reviews and interviews with Bedouin weavers, in their dwellings in western Saudi Arabia, were conducted in order to understand the historical background to Saudi traditional weaving, particularly its weave methods, structures and decorative patterns. In addition, visits were made to traditional centres, museums, antique shops, Bedouin markets and organisations interested in Bedouin weaving.

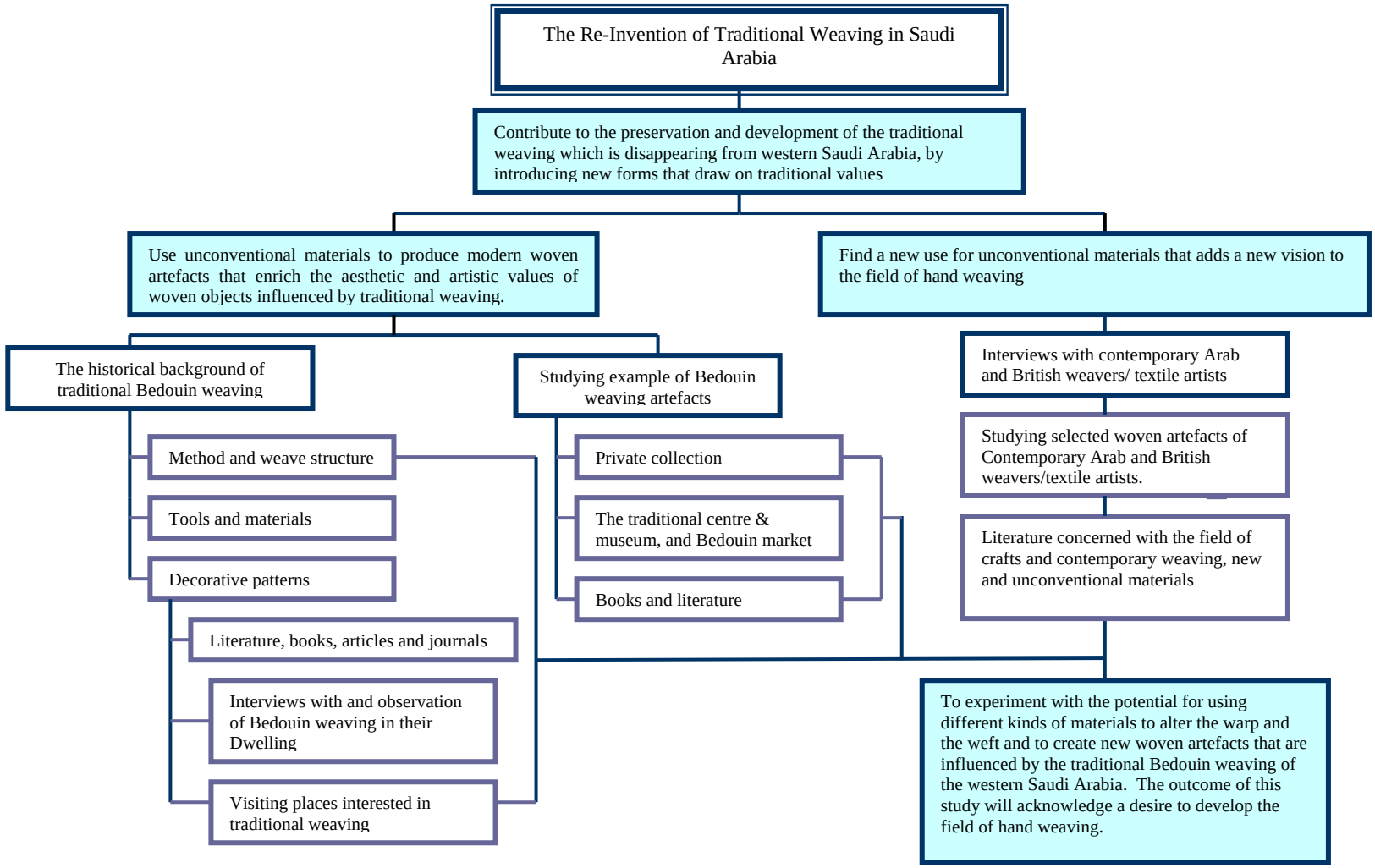
The other key themes of this study have been investigated through relevant literature that is concerned with contemporary weaving and the use of unconventional materials. Whilst gathering knowledge about contemporary weaving, the researcher looked at

contemporary Arab and western artists whose works are relevant to her own practice. The main aim was to gain an understanding of their approaches and basic techniques when using different materials in their work. To achieve this, a number of semi-structured interviews with Arab and British tapestry weavers were conducted in their workshops, homes, or whilst attending public exhibitions. In addition, more formal interviews were conducted, with questions that centred on materials, techniques and designs, and these were recorded photographically and taped (see report on interviews with Arab and British tapestry weavers in appendix C). The study of weaver's artefacts enriched the creative production of this study and helped to develop ideas for the researcher's practical work.

The production phase of this project, based on reflection on her own creative practice, focused on the following:

- A practical consideration of weaving using unconventional materials and synthetic yarns.
- Investigation of the rule of decorative patterns of traditional weaving and associated weave techniques and structures.
- Contribution to new knowledge through the outcomes obtained from theory and practice.

Diagram 2, Thesis' (Aims and Objectives)



CHAPTER TWO

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction and Review of the Literature (relevant studies)

Throughout this study, there are three key issues which run in parallel to support the practical work of this study. These are concerned with traditional weaving from the western region of Saudi Arabia, contemporary weaving, and unconventional materials. Through this chapter, these key themes are investigated in detail to contextualise the work and to explain the relationship between these and the development of the researcher's practical work. The knowledge concerned with the key themes of this research was obtained from previous studies, books, journals, articles, and exhibition and museum visits, all of which are reviewed to achieve the goal of this chapter.

As this study focuses on the field of hand weaving in Saudi Arabia and how it can be developed through the use of different materials. This chapter commences with a review of previous studies and literature, which are relevant to the subject. The goal in reviewing the literature is to see how previous studies related to current research, and what this investigation can gain from the work of others. The literature falls into three types, which are described as:

- Traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia.
- Traditional methods of weaving.
- Materials and processes.

The first kind of literature concerns the traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia, which is the central area of the researcher's study. There are a number of studies, books and articles for example Badour (1996), Topham (1982), Hecht (1989), Ross (1991) and Mauger (1986) about Saudi traditional weaving from different points view; whether relevant to the field of education, as in Badour's study, or as documentation of the traditional crafts and costume of Saudi Arabia. Thus, the researcher referred to studies and literature relevant to the subject matter from Arab and western countries. Through the relevant studies, it was found that work by Sultan (1996), Arafat (1976), and Al-Kauass (1976) discussed the use of geometrical patterns in the Kilim (type of rug) of Egypt, the production of Siena's Kilim, and the artistic characteristics of Coptic weaving from an educational and practical point view. The

same point of view was discussed by Paine (2001) in her book which deals with patterns, tradition and changes in the textiles of India and Pakistan, and also by Gillow & Sentance (1999). Hecht (2001) discussed the traditional textiles of the world and the historical textiles of Guatemala in order to provide a basis for understanding techniques from different places, and to provide designers at all levels with inspiration for their own work. Also, an article by Kumar (2004) shows that the weaver Bobbie Cox considered the traditional craft of India, such as textiles and baskets, as a beautiful resource for her work as a weaver. These studies and books conclude that the decorative patterns and productions of Arab, western and Asian countries are good material for research in education and design.

Ikat is another kind of traditional weaving, even though it is relevant to a different culture - that of southeast Asia - the available literature shows that this kind of approach has been discussed from various aspects, through the studies of Ashby (1986), Ghaddah (1998), Dominie (1981), and Michael (1991). Each study shows that Ikat weaving can be used as a resource for contemporary work, as a learning programme for the students of the Faculty of Art Education in Egypt to design woven fabric, a technical method to limit the types of printing and dyeing used in Ikat weaving, or to be studied from a historical point of view.

The second type of literature deals with the traditional methods of weaving. This method has been practiced for several thousand years, and the woven objects produced in that time reflected different cultures. In recent years, practitioners and others interested in weaving became much more interested in this method and the ways in which it can be developed. Here, these studies are discussed from different perspectives. For instance, study of Salaghor (1997) shows that a connection can be made between the field of hand weaving and other art subjects. Similar studies, such as those of Cocking (1987) and Clarke (1998) deal with their subjects from a historical viewpoint, but the study by Fujii and Sakamoto (1948) investigated the field of weaving from an archeological aspect. The outcome of Cocking's study argues that folk art is a reflection of its environment in its broadest sense, and that to remove such artefacts from their context is to risk misunderstanding their character, function, and appearance. Clarke, however, highlighted the continuing importance of individual and often idiosyncratic

innovation throughout the production, distribution and consumption of Aso Oke textile. However, Fujii and his team found that the production of weaving in the Mesopotamia region of Iraq was affected by various cultures. Therefore, yarns used in woven items seem to have been spun, dyed, and woven in specialist facilities, and many kinds of pile textiles and knotting types are used to form distinctive decorative patterns. Regensteiner (1986) shows that the discussion of all issues relevant to weaving, including the weaver's equipment, yarns, patterns, design and so on, can be considered as a guide for students or others interested in the field, to help stimulate their imagination and to derive inspiration.

The third type of literature deals with materials and processes. The materials that are used for weaving vary in availability and type, colour, texture and size. The contemporary weaver considers yarns and other decorative materials as an inspirational source for his/her design, and the use of materials to the practitioner is similar to the painter's brush and canvas. As the use of different materials is one of the key themes in this study, this section focuses on studies which discuss this aspect of materials in order to understand how other researchers deal with the subject. In these studies, the use of different materials is discussed from various points of view. For example, the studies by Marshall (1994) and Greer (2003) show that the use of non-traditional materials, such as monofilament, slit films or doge fibres, is considered as a suitable alternative to the traditional fibres used in textile processing, and presents a promising new avenue for the textile industry.

Studies by Al-Kauass (1981), Ibrahim (1996), Fakry (1982), Raafatt (1977) and Ahmadd (1977) deal with this issue from an artistic, aesthetic, educational and technical perspective. In addition to these studies, there are others by Hassan (1995) and Mahmoud (1995), showing that the use of waste materials from making clothes and other waste, such as leather or metal wire, can produce aesthetic and functional woven objects and contribute to increase incomings for young people and poor families. Besides these studies, there are books concerned with the same subject; for example, Jerstorp. K & Kohlmark (1988) and Blumenau (1967) discuss the use of natural materials in weaving as a way of learning how other form their projects. Besides that, weaver could use materials to heighten the beauty and originality of a woven artefact.

Whilst Gillow (2001) writes about the possibility of using raffia as a weaving material to produce textiles in parts of the Congo, Taylor (1996) shows that found materials and objects offer inspiration and are a liberating resource in craftwork.

Although these studies and the literature provide valuable information, considerably more work is needed, especially more empirical studies into traditional Bedouin weaving and the hand weaving of Saudi Arabia, as it appears that there is a notable paucity of information in these areas. However, from the few available studies, it was realised that the traditional method of weaving is universal. One could wonder at the way that different cultures or countries separated by great distances have practiced the same methods and techniques, and at the similarity in design (Gillow & Sentance, 1999). In our schools and educational institutions, we are still at the early stages of developing art, particularly with regard to traditional subject matter. So, there is a strong need to explain the importance of implementing this concept in the field of education (Al-Kauass 1976, Arafat 1976, and Badour 1996). However, from the literature concerned with the traditional methods, it was found that weaving has many faces: it can be a craft, an art, used for functional and industrial products, for the individual, a tool for the educator, a technique, or finally, it may be romantic, ancient and contemporary. The books of Regensteiner (1986), Paine (2001), Hecht (2001), and other studies relevant to the use of materials in the field of weaving, show that experimenting with unconventional materials and making sketches in new ways will help to achieve amazing and fast results, and at the same time these materials might be used as alternatives for raw materials. The aesthetic possibilities for these new materials can be felt and seen, and this is alongside the fact that these are re-used or found materials and the reduction of waste is an important issue for contemporary crafts, and is a relevant and positive contribution to our environment (Jerstorp & Kohlmark, 1986; Ibrahim, 1996; Blumenau, 1967; Taylor, 1996). In addition to this, different kinds of non-traditional materials have been considered, such as shell, plastic, glass, leather and remnants of cloth, in combination with weaving materials.

A comparison of the traditional Bedouin weaving of the researcher's country with that of other countries shows that the traditional Saudi Bedouin approach is not a form of folk art, because it was produced to do service and was used for the daily life and needs

of Bedouin people. However, the Kilim of Egypt and textile or weaving of Greece, are folk art products, because of their popularity and widespread appreciation.

2.2 Investigation of the Traditional Bedouin Weaving of Western Saudi Arabia

It can be understood that the artist, or any person who is interested in a particular culture, must have a deep understanding of the natural and historical materials or elements of that culture which extend through time and place. It is important to appreciate the need for and impact of this tradition on our feelings, because we aim not merely to copy or imitate, but to correct with the emotional aspect of heritage. As the weave structures and decorative patterns of traditional Bedouin weaving are the centre of this study, the creative work focused on utilising those elements as key resources, alongside more unconventional materials. This section commences with an introduction to the research area. The definition of 'Bedouin', and the term 'traditional Bedouin weaving' are discussed, as are decorative patterns and the weave structures of that art form.

2.2.1 Introduction to the Research Area

The western region of Saudi Arabia is one of the five administrative regions, the others being the central, northern, southern and eastern regions. The cities of the western region of Saudi Arabia and their villages which were selected as a sample for this study are: Makkah city and its villages, such as Wadi Fattmah, Al-Jamuom, and Al-Rayan, Al-Bwadi area in Jeddah city, the Al-Shfa area, Quorwa district, and Wadi-Lea of Al-Taif city.

Most of the Arabian Peninsula is occupied by Saudi Arabia. The area of the country is calculated to be three quarters of the size of India, and about one-third of the size of the old United States when it comprised of 48 states. Over many centuries, its people have had to endure hardships such as drought, famine and pestilence, but have adapted to these circumstances and overcome them (Topham, 1982:8). The western region, or Hijaze, encompasses the west coast of the kingdom, north of Asir. It is a mountain chain

running from the south to the north, and a plain bordering the Red Sea (See plate 3) (Ross, 1985:67). Heat and aridity characterise its climate, except in oases and in some mountain areas, such as Al-Taif, which are much cooler than the rest of the country in the summer months (Ministry of information, 1998:30).

The most important cities in the western region of Saudi Arabia are Makkah and Al-Madina, the holiest cities of Islam. Jeddah is recognised as the commercial capital of the kingdom. It has been the main port for Makkah since early Islamic times, and it is here that millions of pilgrims visit the Holy Cities each year. The town of Al-Taif is the traditional summer residence for the Makkah, Jeddah and Ryad cities, and the seat of government is moved to Al-Taif during the summer months (Ministry of Information, 1998:33).

Over time, traders and pilgrims from around the world have settled there, often leaving some of their cultural influences behind, but also bringing with them the benefits of their skills. In turn, the Hijaze way of life has absorbed these skills, so the end result is a region rich in ethnic diversity (Ross, 1985:86-88). In accordance with this diversity, the social web of the western region is multinational and multicultural. This is due to the historical role of this region as a trade center for the Middle East and the host region for the annual holy pilgrimage of Islam (Topham, 1982:22).

2.2.2 A definition of Traditional Bedouin Weaving

Hecht (1989:56) has written about the Bedouin, who are the nomadic tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. While they were living in the desert, they spent their time searching for pasture and water for their animals. The travellers of the nineteenth and twentieth century wrote much about their physical and spiritual toughness, and the simplicity of Bedouin life with so few worldly goods. All of their possessions could be packed up and easily transported. Owing to their distance from civilisation, they had developed self-reliant communities (Mauger, 1991:32). However, since the discovery of oil, one can no longer refer to them as ‘far from civilisation’ because rapid changes have taken place and their lifestyle has altered (Mauger, 1991:32). It can be said that what Hecht

wrote about these changes is evident in the new lifestyle of the Bedouin which was described by Nawwab (1995:265). He writes that television aerials have appeared above their tents, camels are transferred in trucks and that water is carried in inner tubes, rather than the more traditional goat skins.

Weaving was central to traditional nomadic lives. It is a simple and apparent craft, and reflects the high level of artistic dexterity and the skill of Bedouin women weavers (anon, n. d:2). At the same time, it supplied them with rugs, *bait-al-sha'r* (hair tents or wool tents), interior dividing curtains, cushions, other domestic accessories and storage containers, such as saddlebags. These woven objects are strong, flexible and light, all vital qualities for their lives, and are also decorative and functional. The women weavers made objects both for their own use and occasionally for sale (Badour, 1996:90). The environment greatly affected traditional weaving and artefacts were produced as part of daily life and put to many uses. The most common raw materials employed in this kind of weaving (see appendix A for more details) are sheep's wool, goat or camel hair and desert herbs. Also, simple wooden tools are used for carding and spinning threads, and wooden or metal ground looms for weaving (Hecht, 1989:58). Traditionally, threads of silk, metal and cotton were imported from India, China and Egypt, and when these threads were available, Bedouin weavers used them to make more delicate objects (Badour, 1996:41). Geometrical patterns were intrinsic to the design of these artefacts. The patterns and designs conformed to and reflected the natural geographical environment of the Arab desert (anon. n. d:2). Most woven products were produced using two kinds of weave structure (Hilden, 1993:10). These weave structures will be further considered in detail in the relevant sections. Previously, these products had essential functions in Bedouin lives, but due to industrial and technological development, they are now nearly obsolete and have lost the function they had within Bedouin tents (Mauger, 1991:30). In light of the argument of Badour, Hilden, and Hecht, it was found that there is a link between their findings and the personal experience of the researcher as a weaver and as a researcher. As mentioned earlier, the researcher became aware of a lack of traditional Bedouin woven artefacts during the course of her investigation. The researcher found it difficult to identify and locate both Bedouin weavers and relevant literature and studies concerned with the subject matter. The aim in meeting Bedouin weavers was to gain a deep understanding

about Saudi traditional weaving and to add to the knowledge obtained from the few relevant pieces of literature she was able to find. Through the interviews with Bedouin women weavers in Makkah city and Al-Taif city, in the western region of Saudi Arabia, it was found that Mauger's suggestions are in line with information gathered by the researcher from Bedouin weavers, in terms of using simple tools, animal fibres, and natural dyes. These elements are similar to those used for weaving in other cultures, whether Arab, western, or Asian.

2.2.3 The Significance of Studying Tradition and Utilising it in Modern Life

Whilst focusing on traditional Bedouin weaving in Saudi Arabia, little attention has been paid to the issue of tradition itself. A number of historians, including Goff and Pierre Nora, have proposed that traditional communities have a different concept of memory and history (1985:1). Their point of view is situated in the western view of the past, where there has been a 'rupture of equilibrium' (Nora, 1989:7). We can think of France as a case study. In the 1930s, the coupling of state and nation was replaced by the coupling of state and society. History was shifted from conventional memory into self-knowledge of society, and also memory became private and individual because of the abandonment of coherent meaning (Nora, 1989:9-11). The transformation of memory implies a shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, and from objective message to subjective reception. The psychologisation of contemporary memory entails a new concept of identity and individuality (Nora, 1989:15).

In the present time, it is understood that there is no limitation to the use of the history. For example, it can be seen that the matter of tradition or history is used for the purpose of education in different subjects of study, either for development, preservation or renewal. However, to use history as a resource in any field, we need to understand the concepts of both history and memory (Nora, 1985:1). There are different concepts of history and memory which have been indicated by Nora (1989:8, 9 and 19). History is reconstruction – necessarily incomplete, and a representation of the past, whereas

memory is a permanently present. History calls for analysis and criticism, and is also mixed, a hybrid, and immutable, but memory is remembrance which is sacred and binds groups. It also has the capacity for metamorphosis.

Similarly, Fayoumy (2000:25) argued the issue of tradition from the point of view of education. She describes the concept of tradition, or folklore, in Arab society as "an inherited tradition" or a historical relic at that time. After a while, this notion becomes a subject or knowledge used in different fields, such as economics, arts, or social sciences.

Through investigating tradition, it was understood that this kind of knowledge could change or disappear due to globalisation. For instance, we have seen that customs and embroidery in Pakistan and India have changed as a result of various factors, such as the education of girls, the breaking down of the caste system and exposure to the media, improved transportation and political events. On the other hand, these changes are far from negative with regard to the legacy of Ghandi. He promoted the craft of hand weaving by establishing an independent village, created hope for a future without colonial rule, and supported people with government work. Alongside Ghandi's legacy, projects have been set up by the Crafts Council of India which have helped to revive and develop Indian and Pakistani traditions, particularly their embroidery and textiles (Paine, 2001:18). Furthermore, the native crafts of Thailand are still practiced by Thai artisans and play a significant part of their daily life. These crafts show a remarkable ability by artisans to reflect their culture, and at the same time to absorb outside influence without losing the new character of their crafts (Warren, 1994:7). This contrasts with traditional Bedouin weaving in Saudi Arabia, which, having disappeared, has been replaced by commercially-made products.

Changes in tradition are not limited to crafts alone; the way of life can also be influenced by changes, whether on a local or a global scale. This is what has happened to the Bedouin lifestyle in Saudi Arabia. At the same time that the Bedouin weavers stopped practicing weaving as a craft, they also improved and altered their way of life in terms of their dwellings, costumes, habits and traditions**.** With industrialisation and increased communication, it was no longer necessary for the Bedouin to live in tents, or

houses of hair, as they are known, (Badour, 1996:98) which were adapted to the climate and the nomadic way of life (Al-Essaa, 1998:20) Bedouin people changed their tents with the hut (also known as the *ushshash*) at first, then the saltbox**,** argillaceous (a house made of mud and hay). In recent years, many Bedouin have moved out of the desert to live in villages and towns in concrete houses, or villas with open walled courtyards (Nawwab, 1995:108) (see appendix B for more details).

Costumes vary from one region to another in terms of colour, design, patterns, materials and embroidery. Today inexpensive, ready-made clothes of western style can be purchased anywhere, as can more costly items. Both cheap and expensive clothes manufactured in the Arab world or the Orient are available for purchase (Ross, 1981:45). Just as the social changes have had an impact on the way that weaving is used for everyday items, so those changes have had an impact on clothing. Traditionally, Arabian clothing for both men and women, whether in town or in the desert, consisted of four layers; the undergarment or *sirwal*, a body-shirt or *thawb* for males, and the *gown* for females. The headgear for men was the *ghoutra, shmagh, or immamah*, and for women it was the *misfa* or *taraha.* The final layer was the outer mantle for males and the *habaya* for females (Ross 1981:35-29). The outer mantle is also known as the *bisht*, or *mishla,* and although its name varies from region to region, the patterns are the same. Today, the traditional outer mantle is only used for special occasions and festivals, having more of a symbolic value. However, when the Bedouin were nomadic, it also had a practical function, being used for a ground sheet or blanket as needed.

Women still wear the black *habaya* or cloak and black veil or *taraha* when they leave the house, for both religious and geographical reasons. “The Prophet Mohammed sought to encourage modesty and respect for both male and female by enjoining true believers to adhere to the customs” (Ross,1981:35). Thus the Prophet stipulated that clothing must be loose and cover the whole body, whilst not restricting any movement, including the movement and position adopted for the prescribed prayers. The hot weather and largely arid land are other factors which encouraged Arabian people to wear layered clothing, as these garments conserve body moisture; they are sensible and appropriate to the weather and circumstances. There are, however, no major differences between the traditional dress of Arabian men and women. The most obvious differences

between them are the colour and type of textile or fabric used. Ross (1981:37) noted that the body-shirt is the essential item of attire for men and women. Men's body-shirts are made of simple white or coloured cotton (plate 4). The traditional gown for women is a vivid and brilliantly coloured item. It is flowing, voluminous and made of fine floral material, plain cotton, wool, silk, satins, or chiffons. It is also decorated with colourful appliqué, or embroidered with rich colourful geometric patterns. Cotton or wool fabrics were mostly used to produce day-to-day clothes (plate 5), whereas the other kinds of materials were reserved for wedding dresses, or ceremonious clothing (plate 6). Gowns had different names, styles and decorative forms, relevant to their region of origin.

The social changes and availability of cheap alternatives that accompanied industrialisation in Saudi Arabia caused the change in habit and costume, but in other traditional societies where this is observed, the causes are different. In Guatemala, for example, the changes occurred because of internal conflicts. Male Indians were suspected of the guerrilla warfare, and this forced a change to their traditional style of dress. With the ready availability of inexpensive and imported cloth into the markets, the wearing of traditional dress is now limited to special occasions and events which are linked with their religious activities, called *the Cofradia*. Thus, the traditional style of men's clothing was altered in line with western costume (Hecht, 2001:19-20).

In addition to changes that happened in dwellings and costumes, habits and traditions with respect to hospitality, marriage, childbirth and education have also changed. Traditionally, the Bedouin greeted their guests warmly, served them with coffee, tea and dates, and then offered invited guests food, usually prepared at home. Today, however, foods tend to be bought from restaurants (of which there are many in the villages) which specialise in preparing traditional meals. Although Bedouin families were nomadic and uneducated, they now send their children to school, even if this means traveling far away from their village. Each village, however, has a school and a clinic with a doctor and a full-time nurse. Therefore, folk medicine, confinement and operations conducted at home have disappeared **(**Kuttob-Kanah & Al-Kulle, 1989**:**40). The Bedouin used to marry early and only within their tribes. In recent years, these traditions have relaxed, whilst dowry values have increased. Also, the Bedouin wedding ceremony is now held

in a private hall, rather than in the bride and groom's house **(**Kuttob- Kanah & Al-Kulle, 1993**:**47).

Confirming the importance of understanding tradition, Coe (1980:10) wrote of the traditional American Indians in his book, *Lost and Found Traditions*. Although writing specifically about Native Americans, the point that he makes about the relevance of tradition can be transferred to the situation in Saudi Arabia. He wrote that in order to become a modern Indian, tradition must not be cast aside. It is better to frequently incorporate the past, or tradition, into the present in two ways: great breadth of vision, and great freedom. This does not mean that tradition is narrowly defined.

Different authors have argued about the point of changing and maintaining tradition. Al-Jouhari (1973:74) reports that at the present time, the rate of technological progress introduces the importance of studying tradition and working together to preserve our heritage, so that we can utilise it to serve the purposes of developing and improving traditional arts in general. Also, Fayoumy (2000:22) argues that the idea of human heritage has been affected by the concept of accelerated development since the beginning of the mechanical age, and that a concentration on production quantity has become the main economic goal. The need to preserve tradition is apparent, and a dynamic between tradition and the contemporary has thus evolved. Therefore, we must work to bring the key characteristics of our tradition forward to satisfy the needs of the present in order to develop it and to find out the best ways of using modern techniques to serve and inform our view of tradition.

Nora, in his text *Between Memory and History* (1989:8) noted that the acceleration of history confronts us with the difference between real social memory and unviolated history. It also causes the loss of the ceaseless reinvention of tradition, linked to ancestors and undifferentiated times, and a loss of ritual and the repetition of timeless practices.

However, as Rashwaan (1993:4) wrote, we can say that traditional arts, including handicrafts, can be recognised as one of the fields of heritage that researchers who are interested in tradition must work seriously to investigate and understand. We can

achieve higher productivity whilst working continuously to keep this tradition alive and be pertinent by gathering traditional objects and artefacts and tracing development through the study of those artefacts.

Al-Maiman (1990:12) and other authors reinforce the need to maintain our tradition. Over many centuries, up to and including the present, generations have worked to preserve the view and reality of culture, heritage/tradition and history, and have worked to pass their tradition from one generation to another. They believed that tradition forms the roots that link the present with the past, because societies always change and develop under the pressure exerted by new facilities and instruments (Al- Maiman, 1990:13).

The process of new creation has been developed in other Arabic and western countries which have experienced as industrial revolution. They have worked hard to make a connection between the old and new, contemporary and original, through flexible thought and free and artistic experiment (Saffwat, 1998:69). In addition to this, Al-Maiman and Saffwat Al-wateri (1988:79) argued that the need to react to heritage and its elements does not mean refusing every new technique and turning backward. The researcher's study of tradition is not only concerned with the investigation of patterns or the formation of artefacts, but also involves awareness of tradition, its philosophy and the circumstances surrounding its development. In other words, tradition must be understood as a complete view of life's activities.

Nowadays, it is understood that the function of traditional weaving is not just utilitarian or aesthetic, but has different layers of use. For example, the production of fabrics is necessary to satisfy the needs or requirements of modern life, and to solve problems associated with the beautification and organisation of new cities (Badour, 1996:156). Furthermore, fabric or cloth has a role in communication, enhancing the social and political domain, the expression of complex moral and ethical issues such as dominance and sexuality and the vulnerability of people and their relationship to illness and death (Weiner and Schneider, 1989:1-2). Making tents or using fabric as architecture is an element still employed in Saudi Arabia and the Arab and western world. It seems that people still use this product as an important means of creating a special aesthetic

medium or adding aesthetic values to spaces and parks inside their cities (Badour, 1996:156). Today, tents and other traditional objects, such as a coffee pot or *dalla*, and mortars, are used for pleasure when visiting the desert for weekends and vacations, or in the courtyard of the house so that they may still enjoy the beauty of tradition and woven structures, and relax with friends and family in the fresh air (Hilden, 1988:10). This leisure use might be a good resource for inspiration for contemporary artists in the field of arts and crafts. As well as the social desire to holiday in the desert, emulating the simple life, a cultural historical identity could also be reinforced through the use of design and decoration made relevant for city life in public building, homes, and offices. This artwork can have an affinity with architecture, and its colour and warmth makes them suitable for large, modern expanses of stone, glass and steel (Regensteiner, 1986:135).

Following the plethora of arguments about the traditional arts, we can eventually recognise that they transcend country boundaries and are in fact international; they are considered an expression of human effort and exceed the limits of time and place. Thus, it is understood that traditional arts can make a great impact on society by sustaining the minds and emotions that create a culture. At the same time, traditional artists can address society's needs and communicate with people by specifying need and defining form. This in turn consolidates the quality of functional and cultural utilisation.

2.2.4 Design and Weave Structure of the Traditional Bedouin Weaving

The decorative patterns and weave structures of the traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia are important aspects in the creative work of this study, so this section aims to investigate the general characteristics of both motifs and weave techniques. Following this, other patterns, which are less common in traditional weaving, are discussed. In addition, selected examples of the most common woven items are explained.

The issue of design and ornamentation is obviously an important aspect, not just for traditional Bedouin weaving, but also for today and contemporary designs. It is

considered a personal approach to life and as an art with its own history. The resources for design are varied. They may include geometrical patterns, ideas drawn from nature, landscape, animals or historical figures, and may be influenced by Greek or Coptic textiles, African wood work, pre-Columbian pottery or many other things. They are a good source of inspiration and stimulation, so we find ornamentation applied by artists to functional items, such as buildings, furniture, utensils, textiles and clothing, weapons, portable objects and so on (Regensteiner, 1986:115, and Trilling, 2001:14). Functional objects, and even bodies, have been decorated since prehistoric times (Trilling, 2001:14). Weavers today are always looking for new design and individual and expressive forms, and can transform any subject into a form through the use of coloured threads (Blumenau, 1967:29). The basic concerns are texture, colour, materials and scale or proportion, and these need to be considered in order to achieve a good design (Albers, 1966:71). Although ornaments have different styles, the principle did not change until the twentieth century (Trilling, 2001:12). One may ask why decoration or beauty is as important as the basic function or use to which an object is put. This is similar to the question asked by William Morris in his lecture 'The Arts and Crafts of To-day' of 1889. The answer that he gave is that decoration and beautiful, well-made objects provide pleasure both to the user and producer (Frank, 2000:22). They also heighten the awareness and add a spiritual dimension to our surroundings, so that people become aware of how and where to look (Trilling, 2001:22).

The origins of the patterns in Bedouin weaving are complex. In fact, interviews reveal that the weavers of western Saudi Arabia have no knowledge of the development of weaving techniques or decorative patterns. A variety of simple or complicated colourful geometrical shapes comprise traditional Bedouin weaving. These geometrical patterns tend to be limited to triangles, diamonds and rectangular or square figures, with little or no representational images (Ross, 1985:120). The figures can be repeated and invented to construct a complete design. A series of symmetrical, parallel zigzags or irregular, overlapping triangles are often employed (Mauger, 1991:80). Each motif is built up individually with a separate weft and a mathematical method, where the number of warps must be odd, (for example, 3, 5, 11…). In terms of the relationship between patterns on other craft objects and Bedouin weaving, a study of relics in the *Tayma* area in the north region of Saudi Arabia found ceramic plates dating from the fifteenth and

eighteenth century BC, decorated with geometrical patterns similar to those employed in woven products (plate 7) (Ministry of Education, 1990:22). This study identified patterns which have a long tradition, evident in the production of woodcraft, jewellery or costume, as well as in weaving and ceramics.

Traditionally, patterns are given names, which differ from tribe to tribe, or region-to-region, but are similar in shape. Differences in design are a personal issue, where each weaver likes to demonstrate their skill. The designs are long-established and created as a reflection of the effects of previous cultures or of the desert context and the principles of Islamic religion.

Held (1978:39) argues that the reason decorative patterns in Islamic art tend to be highly abstract and geometric is partially due to the Islamic religion's ban on the representation of human or animal forms. The forms are quite remote from realistic representation and have an abstract appearance, while still retaining some symbolic significance. This form, which is known as *arabesque,* is created from a liner ornament with an interlaced shape based on three elements; pure geometric relation with a variety of angles and movement, endlessly flowing curvilinear patterns, or leaves, flowers and occasionally animals. This kind of motif was accepted in Arabia and used to decorate all flat surfaces in the home and also to embroider traditional costumes (Ross, 1981:35). Thus, since the time of the emergence of the Prophet Mohammed's message, it has been understood that life and religion are inseparable (Sancer, 1954:96). Jerep (1995:10) also noted that Muslim artisans consider Islam to be a religion, but also a philosophy and pattern for life.

As a result of this prohibition, Bedouin women weavers tended to make an elaborate exploration of geometric patterns and designs. They reduced the forms to lines, points and geometric figures with oppositions of black and white, and organised them in horizontal registers (Mauger, 1991:83). The researcher's interview with Bedouin weavers confirms Mauger's argument about changing the forms or figures to lines or points. The line, which has a zigzag shape, is derived from a snake's movement, whereas points represent insects or ants. In different traditional societies, these symbols mean different things. For instance, in Guatemalan textiles, vertical zigzags are a

description of lightning and the horizontal ‘S’ describes the two headed snake (Hecht, 2001:17). Although Bedouin weavers derive their decorative patterns from animal features, they carry no symbolic meaning for them. This contrasts with the triangle shapes in Egyptian folk art, which represents protection from the “evil eye” (Sultan, 1996: 184), or the motif of the tree which is symbolic of the same thing in Greek folk art (Cocking, 1987:12). The hand and the eye in Moroccan-crafted objects, such as textiles, woodwork, leather, or jewellery, have the same meaning (Jereb, 1995:21). The decorative patterns of the textiles of India and Pakistan are divided into two kinds; figurative and geometric. Figurative patterns, such as elephants, tigers, camels and horses, are related to Hindu belief, where it is thought these symbols bring fertility, prosperity or protection from evil spirits. Such geometric and linear patterns are found in Muslim work. The beauty of these patterns derives from the change in stitch direction and the juxtapositions of colour (Paine, 2001:13).

The non-use of human and animal forms in traditional weaving is of interest because it is at odds with earlier designs from the pre-Islamic period, when human and animal figures were frequently used. This kind of design flourished outside the peninsula, in Syria, Iran and Iraq. For example, a king hunting on horseback is depicted on a stucco relief plaque in a small palace in northern Iran. This artwork belongs to the tradition of Sasanian art, and dates back to the end of the seventh or the first half of the eighth century. It is difficult at times to distinguish between early Islamic and pre-Islamic art. Initially, artists who worked under the late Byzantine or Sasanian patronage continued to follow pre-existing conventions even after they came under Muslim patronage (Iacma.org. 2006*).* At the end of the period, we find that the Sasanian and Byzantine styles, forms and techniques impact on the early Islamic times, where variety was the very essence of the art. But later artists renewed and revived the character and appeal of the model whose merit was sanctioned by time, habits and customs, through the use of subtle variations in detail and the universal adoption of the Arabic script, which served as a basic form of ornament in art and made Islamic art into a distinctive style. This kind of art coincided with the bounds of the faith, but not with those of any particular ethnic or political group within it (Rice, 1975:7-11).

Through the literature review and interviews with Bedouin weavers in their dwellings, it was found that there are also practical reasons for using geometrical design in weaving, beside the prohibition on using figurative shapes. Bedouin weavers consider geometrical designs to be traditional, the ones which they were taught as they grew up, and discovered just as their parents and grandparents did. In this way, they can maintain an inherited tradition passed from one generation to another. Also, due to the simplicity of the loom itself, these patterns are deliberately schematised and easier to weave.

Whilst gathering information through the interviews, the weavers showed the researcher numerous woven objects, which were representative of desert life, as examples of geometrical patterns, weave structures, functional objects and visual characteristics. The researcher looked at each of the objects, took them in her hand, examined them from every side and contemplated them. These woven items were:

1. Domestic items, such as rugs/*shamllah* and cushions.
2. Storage items, such as women's bags and coffee-bean bags.
3. Decorative accessories, including items for the tent wall and coffee pot holders.

(See appendix G for more images of woven products, whether from the western region of Saudi Arabia, other regions, or from the Gulf countries).

Previously, these objects were considered measures of a Bedouin woman's prestige, but today they remind them of desert life and memories of the past. As they became elderly, their owners seemed only to be the guardians for these woven objects. These woven objects, alongside other products of traditional Bedouin weaving, have another purposes beyond their main function. As they were produced in rich colours and with a profusion of designs, they add a decorative and aesthetic value to their location and impart a spirit of delight to an otherwise harsh life. This is similar to what Dissanayake (1992:33) said about the need for art – she wrote that life can not be imagined without any form of art, whether this form is visual or literary. We are able to detect in different ways when art is absent; we feel it as thirst, hunger, or deprivation. One might ask whether human beings need art, as a biological or psychological need, and this can be answered with reference to Dissanayake's (1992:33-34) argument. The concept or word 'art' is common, and includes both object and essence. However, this essence is not easy to articulate in prose. Dissanayake goes on to explain the human need for art as follows:

‘The reason for art, when reasons are sought, has been found in theology, history, sociology, or psychology - not biology’. Biological needs are those which are necessary for survival, or at least for well-being. However, art can be considered as a behavior when humans undertake activities or something helps them to survive and feel good.

Returning to the woven objects which are seen in the Bedouin’s dwellings, some of the pieces of weaving are represented in this section to explain the use of geometrical patterns and weave structures. From the literature review and study of these products, the researcher learnt about the design and weave structure of traditional Bedouin objects. These two elements became the main resource for the practical work of this study, and at the same time strengthened its impact. Decorative patterns in traditional weaving can be divided into two types relevant to weave techniques: pickup weave and weft twining (Hilden, 1988:10). Pickup weave involves three complementary warp-faced weaves, which allows weavers to expose skill and differences in patterns. *Weirjan* and *mithkar* patterns are created from triangular and diamond figures. These patterns give the surface of the woven object a pebbly effect, and appear in different shapes (plate 8, and 8.1). A combination of doubled warps with single warps was used to create these two patterns. This technique is common for Bedouin weavers, because they can easily and quickly weave this kind of pattern (Hilden, 1988:10). See, for example, the pattern in plate nine used to decorate the cushion of a Bedouin weaver in El-Moujaheden village, Jeddah city (plate 10). The overall shape of this woven object is rectangular. Sheep’s wool, with natural and commercial dyed threads was used to make this cushion. Different-shaped geometrical patterns in rich colour and black and white were employed. It consists of narrow and vertical woven strips of warp-faced plain weave and alternating vertical and horizontal bands of complementary warp pattern weave, which is represented in horse teeth/*derous al- khail, teeth* or *sinun*, and different shapes of *weirjan*. At the bottom are four bands of weft-faced twined tapestry with warp fringes. In this piece of weaving and the cushion of Oum Addel in Wadi Lea area of Al-Taif city, 2003 (plate 11), different textures and designs are to be seen. This is because of the variation in patterns and materials used. Besides the yarns of sheep’s wool and cotton, metallic threads are also used in this cushion. Often, the Men’s, *majlis*, or reception section in a tent is lined with cushions, to be used for both sitting and sleeping purposes.

- The Molar pattern (plate 12) is produced by a simpler and less common technique. Bedouin weavers called this pattern *druse* or horse's teeth *derous al- khail*. The molar pattern is created by alternating the weaving of one shed in plain weave, and the next in pickup weave at the same time. This technique does not allow weavers to create different patterns. In additional to this kind of pattern there are other patterns, such as *sinun* or teeth (plate 13), and checks or *numayla* (plate 14), which are created by groupings of overlapping rectangles of different sizes (Hilden, 1988:11). The *numayla* pattern can be seen in the rug of Oum Mohammed Al-Suffiany at Al-Taif city, 2001 (plate 15) as a decoration element. Rugs are usually made of two long narrow strips, woven in warp-faced plain weave with matching designs, sewn together. Sometimes they have narrow bands of twined tapestry at one end, and a twisted warp fringe. The rug which can be seen in plate 15 is made of brown and beige sheep's wool and black goat hair, and consists of warp-faced plain weave strips sewn together. The five woven panels of white, brown and black are warp-faced plain weave and decorated with grouped parallel vertical lines. A narrow band of a series of little ants or *numayla* pattern of black and white, is woven on the brown band of the rug. Traditionally, rugs have different styles, including *Troudah, Miaazalah* and *Wadiaah*. These names were given according to the patterns used to make them.

  The image which appears in plate 16 is another kind of rug. This one is from the Gulf (probably Ajman), and is made from chemically dyed sheep's wool with natural camel hair and black goat hair. It consists of two panels, each 11 feet long, sewn together. These panels are made of warp-faced plain with weft-faced twined tapestry bands at both ends (Topham, 1982:37). Although this example was obtained from another country, it shows a similarity in decorative patterns and weave structure. This in turns means that the weaving of wool is a traditional craft practiced by the Bedouin of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula (anon, n. d: 2).

  A tent usually contains one or more rugs, which measure 4.11 feet by 8.2 feet. Occasionally, the rug has another social function. It is used as a dividing curtain between men and women's sections, as women have to remain hidden when the men have visitors and occupy the *majlis* (plate 17). This large tapestry is an

impressive thing to see with its various decorative patterns and colours. It is an artistic expression which attracts the visitor's attention and asserts the women's existence. However, the women can observe the visitors without being seen through the eyeholes which are not deliberately made, but are openings between the different lengths of woven strips sewn together to make the curtain. Whatever their position, behind a veil or curtain they are ever alert, and they can support their men in all circumstances and intervene to give their opinion when the visitors have left.

- The third kind is the *sgajarah* (tree) or saha (wall) pattern (see plate 18). This is the most difficult and changeable warp weave technique, because it needs a highly-skilled weaver to achieve it. Two or three yarns of dark and light tone are warped to create this kind of pattern, which is usually produced in a block to avoid long floats on the back of the weave, where the rejected yarns from each pair lie. This technique allows the weaver to produce linear or solid geometrical patterns, and sometimes there is the possibility of creating simple representational images (Hilden, 1988:11). However, the *weirjan* pattern can also be created by using weft twining. The researcher's studies of the collection of woven objects showed that this kind of pattern has not been widely used. The reason for this could be the difficulty in weaving it, and that it is often used in large woven pieces, such as dividing curtains, rugs or blankets.

More recently, some figurative elements have been added to the abstract, geometric patterns. These include incense burners, *wasm* (tribal marks), the weaver's name, the date, Koranic verse, airplanes, cars (plates 19 and 20) or anything common to Bedouin and village life. These kinds of motifs, used in otherwise traditional Bedouin weaving, represent the changes that have taken place in their lifestyle since the 1930s (Mauger, 1991:90). This development aligns with Mauger's argument:

> "The acculturation which the Bedouins are undergoing has given rise to a new style of design in which western influences vie with the specifically Bedouin features".

During the researcher's interviews with Bedouin weavers, they disclaimed the use of new style designs in their work, but thought they might be used in other regions of

Saudi Arabia (eastern or northern, for example) or by other tribes of the western region. When meeting with them, the researcher did not observe these kinds of patterns. However, what is also significant is their lack of knowledge of other tribe's work. Their own decorative traditions have been passed down through the generations, but because of their comparative isolation, as well as the tradition of learning through doing, they have no knowledge of other styles of weaving.

Other traditional societies have also been affected by cultural change and have altered their weaving to correspond with the changing circumstances. For instance, with the arrival of the railroad that cut across America in the 1880s, many Navajo weavers began to change the decoration of their textiles to reflect the shapes of the new methods of transportation. These figures appeared on their pictorial rugs instead of the usual geometrical patterns. Suzy Black, for example, was a Navajo weaver who decorated her work with different pictorial forms, such as butterflies, exotic birds, lions and tigers rather than horses, mesas, sheep and other figures. Many devoted enthusiasts of contemporary Navajo weaving hope to see this approach or trend develop further, because the freedom in using new patterns, materials and colours enables them to explore new motifs and trends. At the same time, this freedom is a radical change for Navajo weavers (Kaufman & Selser, 1985:106). It is believed that for many generations geometrical patterns have been an integral part of the weaving produced by Bedouin weavers, and they can not replace the old style with a new one in line with the changes which have happened in their lifestyle and have had such a significant effect upon them. Many Bedouin weavers are older, and as they give up weaving, the new generation of nomadic weavers are not able, nor do they have the desire, to produce woven objects of equal quality.

Besides the things that were learned about patterns and design in traditional Bedouin weaving, it was found that over many centuries, woven objects were mainly produced by women. Male weavers were rare in Saudi Arabia, because herding and agriculture were the main jobs for males and the matter of weaving was left to the women. Bedouin weavers who were interviewed informed the researcher that they considered weaving to be part of a woman's domestic role, together with cooking, cleaning, care of the children and helping with the livestock. They considered the time they spent weaving to

be a sociable part of their day, where other members of the family or a group of friends came together to weave in company. Thus, the learning process focuses on watching and learning from one's mother as she weaves. It is similar to the way a child learns to speak, and like speech, the words and grammar are slow to evolve. This has been the method for many generations.

The rules of weaving in western countries have also been discussed by Brown (2004:9) and Bridgman (1991:121). In the twenty-first century, control over tapestry production shifted from a patriarchal system to a feminine occupation, and the female weavers were prevalent, whereas in the medieval time, for example, women were only allowed to spin, and weaving was left to the men. Women were prevented by the male dominated-medieval Weavers' Guilds from making such products as household furnishings for themselves. This situation differs from that in Bedouin society, where, as previously mentioned, weaving is a female occupation.

The fact that weaving is primarily left to the women was not the only finding. There is also a difference between products woven by men and those by women. The objects made by male weavers are simple, decorated with linear strips, and concerned with the production of large pieces, such as rugs or blankets, whereas women's products are more highly decorated, involving large and small delicate pieces (personal communication with Bedouin weavers, 2003). Although there are differences between both products, they were used at the same level.

The distinction between the forms and functions of the woven artefacts created by the different genders is something which is seen in many traditional cultures. For instance, on Sabu Island in Indonesia, men's patterns are concerned with geometric patterns, such as zigzags, stars and diamonds, in addition to the use of the flower motif. But the motifs used in the women's weaving is more naturalistic. The figures in their work include flowers, plants, animals and birds (Herald, 1992:119). In contrast, the difference between African men and women's weaving is the use of the loom and the woven products themselves. Women weavers use a vertical loom, and a double-heddle, whereas a narrow-band and horizontal treadle loom is used by male weavers. The women's woven products are approximately twice the size of the work area, but men

produce an extremely long, narrow, strip of woven material. Finally, women weave for their own and their family's use, and if there are excess products, they can be sold or bartered, whereas male weavers make woven objects exclusively for sale (The Museum of Modern Art, 1972:155).

The reason for weaving differs from one culture to another. We understand that the importance of weaving in the Bedouin community is to supply themselves with artefacts for daily use, whereas in Pakistan (Paine, 2001), Greece (Cocking, 1987), and south east Asia (Herald, 1992:122), it is a key element in a young woman's marriage dowry. In Sarawak, the number of textiles and gongs the family owns is a measurement of their fortune, but in north and north east Thailand, weaving has played an essential role. Women weave for four months of the year and then work in the rice fields during the remaining months, particularly during the rainy season, which is the crucial time for planting (Herald, 1992:122).

Through interviews with Bedouin weavers and reviewing the literature, it was found that there are various weaving structures, such as the warp-faced plain weave (plate 21). This weave structure is the most common, fastest and easiest structure in Bedouin weaving. It is used to weave large, wide pieces, such as tents, rugs, tent dividers and coverings. These pieces were made in long, narrow strips that were woven on a ground loom and sewn together upon completion. Having prepared the loom, the weaver began the process by pushing down or lifting up the sets of warps to insert the weft yarns through the shed, which is created by holding alternate sets of threads open with the heddles (Badour, 1996:94).

- Warp-faced plain weave means that the warp yarns appear through the surface of the weave because they are close together. This weave structure is achieved by passing the weft over one warp and under the next, and is repeated across the width of the piece of weaving (Znamierowski, 1967:43). This is the fastest and simplest method of weaving and is the foundation of Bedouin weaving. Using this method, vertical and horizontal striped and checked patterns are produced in a diversity of combinations (Badour, 1996: 95). The use of plain weave was not limited to the work of weaving, but was also used in leather work (Sewafi,

1999:150), lace weave (Nordfors, 1985: 109), and making baskets (Meilach, 1974:177) and (Rossbach, 1973:62).

- Another type of weaving is called *Musaggat* 'meaning' weft-faced or weft twining (plate 22). In this method the warps are completely covered. It is also common, as it is used to make small and delicate objects, for instance, household ornaments, coffee-bean bags, potholders and other decorative items. This kind of weave structure can be produced both on-loom and off-loom, and is less commonly used to weave a complete piece, such as a rug or dividing curtain. Woven items which are produced by using weft twining are made without a loom and use thread for the warp and silk or cotton yarns for the weft. Thick yarns are stretched horizontally around the knees, a box or chair legs. Warp yarns are hung from this yarn by folding twine thread in half and knotting it to the supporting yarn so that the ends are left hanging. The weaver starts work from the top down, pushing up the woven wefts to make the structure tight. The weft is twisted around groups of warps on both sides of the weave at once, creating a surface similar to tapestry (Hilden, 1988:12). Occasionally, this kind of weave is used as a border on a warp-faced article to strengthen the borders of the larger wool pieces, so the technique differs when a loom is used from that for smaller pieces described above.

The researcher found amongst her collection of Bedouin weaving a coffee bean and cardamom's bag (plate 23) from Oum Mohammed Al-Suffiani form Quorwa at Al-Taif city, 2003. It is an openwork leather bag made of weft-faced twined tapestry or *Musaggat*, and cotton threads of rich colour. This coffee-bean bag has three separate sections joined to three bands of net leather. The first and third sections are decorated with geometrical designs called *weirjan* in various shapes, but the second part has another kind of patterning of diamonds and triangles. The top end of this bag is reinforced with leather, and the bottom is decorated with woven tapestry bands with black fringes. Plate 24 shows another kind of coffee-bean bag, and individuality in design and form. This woven item it is the Records at Shobrah Palace Museum in Al-Taif city, 2003.

- Weft-faced weave, or *Musaggat*, comprises two kinds of structure. The first one is described above, and the other is called chaining or *hatwa* (plate 25). Its appearance is similar to chain stitch in embroidery. Chaining starts with passing the weft thread behind the warp, and then making a loop in the space between the next two warp ends by pulling the loop forward from the weft. To complete the chaining structure, you need to put your fingers through the loop to pull on the weft behind the warp. In this way you can pull another loop through the existing one in the next space along the warp. Repeat this technique on each warp end and tighten each loop as you go until the loops get larger. Having finished the row, you can bring the end of the weft thread through the last loop in the chain (Peeg, 1986:77). Chaining structure is used to weave the narrow five-centimetre decorative strips that hang from saddlebags, and also to weave small, delicate objects. It can be used to strengthen the ends of large woven objects, such as rugs or blankets (personal communication with Bedouin weaver, September 2003).

The tent wall - or animal decoration (plate 26) which can be seen at Oum Awadd in Al-Taif city, 2003 is a colourful woven object with weft-faced chaining tapestry ends, short tassels and fringes, and warp yarns in red. One band of *weirjan* pattern, in different shapes (triangular and rectangular), decorates this object which is woven in silk and cotton threads of several colours (light and dark blue, red, pink, green, yellow, orange and white). Red cotton cloth is sewn to the top of the front of the item to reinforce it. Such bands serve both as tent wall or decorations for animal such as camels or horses. If a comparison is made between this woven item and the other one in plate 27, we can see there is individuality in design, even though the same form is used. The use of another kind of weave structure, such as weft-faced twining, and the way of employing the triangle shape to produce one band of *weirjan* pattern, make the difference between these two woven items. It can be seen that the weaver plays with one pattern to produce different forms. Such woven objects demonstrate the high level of skill of the Bedouin weaver, but also show that although the figures have been learned from the previous generation and the traditions continue, the weaver still injects her own individual voice into her artefacts.

Arguing in favour of the way in which Bedouin weavers learn their skills, Dormer (1994:45) writes that learning through imitation and demonstration is an easier process than listening to an explanation of the rules. The mind can memorise a movement or activity made by someone else, to be used later. Keeping practice as the foundation of making an artefact will enable the learner to invent or make his/her own variations. He/she becomes able to recognise the differences in work through seeing his/her mistakes. In his text *The Language and Practical Philosophy of Craft* Dormer concludes that there are two kinds of knowledge. The first can be expressed theoretically, for example, as medical or technological knowledge. The other can not be written down or described easily. It can only be presented or recognised in others and demonstrated through example and comparison. Painting, pottery, sculpture or any other type of craft represent this kind of knowledge (1997:219-230). This means that tacit and propositional information form the body of knowledge. David Pye argued that there is a correlation between designer and the maker or craftsperson, as each of them relies on the other to achieve the work. Designers are concerned with finding solutions to problems, but have less knowledge of the making processes. Whilst they need to be able to communicate their wishes to the maker, the maker can, in turn, comment on and interpret the design when making the objects (Dormer, 1994:14). The researcher is a teacher and so is aware that learning is an interactive process between the student and the tutor. It is an emotional, intellectual and physical process rather than a mechanical activity. Learning is not an imposition of ideas from outside, but a natural outcome of gradually gained tacit knowledge.

So, what is being argued here is that the differences of pattering in the decorative objects come about through a learning process, where evolution rather than revolution has been the norm for centuries. Within the parameters of the materials, methods and traditions the Bedouin weavers still express their own creative personalities. Dormer (1994:42-56) noted that the understanding of craft processes, materials and styles should be evolutionary, in other words that these things develop gradually rather than forcing a break with the past. He set out certain parameters of practice that were underpinned by the idea of practice gained through the accretion of tacit knowledge. He felt that this type of understanding, rooted in the traditions of the past, would lead to more freedom of expression. The creative process, he argued, was not just about

revealing individual personalities, but about standing on the shoulders of those who had gone before. The best way to learn this was through observing and absorbing the knowledge of an expert and then using trial and error in order to understand the limits and possibilities of the materials. It was also, he believed, important to be discriminating. These ideas clearly have relevance to my proposal for creating new possibilities for weaving in Saudi Arabia based on the traditions of Bedouin weaving. These designs refer to traditional motifs and styles, making the best use of the potential of the new materials and contributing, in a very human way, to the progressive development of the urban domestic environment.

In summary, the geometrical designs worked through traditional Bedouin weaving are amongst the most common but are perhaps the most difficult motifs to assess in terms of their origin and significance. All of the motifs described are found in forms of weaving that were seen during the researcher's visits to Bedouin weavers in the western region of Saudi Arabia, except the *sgajarah* or tree, saha or wall and the new styles of design. In addition, the researcher was surprised by her investigation as new insights were obtained that were not found in the literature relevant to traditional Bedouin weaving or through her interviews with Bedouin weavers. These include:

- The technique of chaining structure.
- The technique of bead weaving.
- The use of cloth strips for the weft.
- The structure used to weave geometrical patterns.

At the same time the researcher discovered how Bedouin people learned the process of weaving, how they produced woven articles and the role and significance of these items.

2.3 The Importance of Modernity in Contemporary Weaving

Contemporary weaving is important to the researcher, both as a practitioner and teacher of the art, and for the creative work of this research. The aim of this investigation is to develop an in-depth understanding of the impact of modernity on the field of craft, and particularly the field of hand weaving. Whilst gathering information to firm up and develop the practical work on modern weaving, the researcher looked at contemporary

Arab and British weavers whose products are relevant to her own work. Unconventional or new materials and design or weave structures are used in the woven artefacts of contemporary weavers and textile artists. Nine contemporary British and Arab weavers met the researcher and responded to her questions. In addition, they provided her with photos and explanations of their works. In general, there is little difference between Arab and British contemporary weavers, even though they are from different cultures; indeed, it might be said that there are more similarities in their approaches than differences. This is explained further in the relevant section, and more details are available in appendix C.

Regensteiner in her book *The Art of Weaving* (1986:7) wrote

> "Weaving was never like this before!" exclaimed an art critic at a display of contemporary woven wall hanging. His words illustrate vividly the enormous versatility of the old age-old craft, emerging fresh and new in modern form.

Enormous changes in the field of crafts, including hand weaving, took place as a result of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which began in 1861 in Britain. The ideas introduced by the movement were then developed and rationalised, post 1919, by the Deutscher Werkbund and Bauhaus (Waller, 1997:7).

In the Arts and Crafts Movement, Morris sought to give his own woven work the spirit of the Middle Ages tapestry and to bring this style to life again. His method was concerned with the use of a limited number of colours and broad hatching. Alongside Morris's method, the weavers at the time tried to experiment with the potential for using textural threads to produce a less flat and less regular surface (The Scottish Arts Council, 1980:9-11). Smith (1975:22) wrote about the commercial success of Morris, which eventually led him towards socialism. Smith noted that "Morris himself was unhappy with a society in which only the relatively prosperous could afford his work". His commercial success was founded on rich people who wished to furnish their houses with high quality materials, whereas the middle and lower classes could not afford to buy his work, and the kind of furniture they bought to furnish their houses was, in every respect, simpler. Although Morris concentrated on pieces that suited the upper classes,

he also kept in mind other categories of people and designed, for example, two kinds of chair for the middle and lower classes. One of these was the simplest Morris design, known as the Morris chair, whereas the other, based on the traditional Sussex design, was lightweight and known as a rush-seated chair.

The aims of the Arts and Crafts Movement were both social and artistic. Morris wanted to make life better for the masses, who he felt were dehumanised by the power of the machine and the desire for profit. He advocated a change in society, where there would be a real role for hand-made objects in everyday life. Other thinkers were more pragmatic. Henry Cole, for instance, hoped to reinvigorate the decorative arts through the re-unification of craftsman or designer with industry. This ideal was continued on the continent, with the Bauhaus and Werkbund schools in Germany establishing a standardisation of design to fit with the needs of industrial production. The Bauhaus movement also attempted to establish workshop systems which would promote new relationships between craft practitioners, designers and industry (Ioannou, 1997:20).

One may think that the Bauhaus school was a school of architecture because its leader and most of its teachers were architects. In fact it was not, it was a school of painting, sculpture, craft and design. However, the objects were designed to fit into the new style of architecture, so that metalwork and ceramics, as well as woven artefacts, were all geometric in design. Unlike Morris's patterns, this was not rural craft, but was made for the growing, sophisticated urban audience. Those in the weaving workshop were adept in both hand weaving and mechanical production, combining both craft and design skills (Weltge, 1993:92). Although Gunter Stölzl considered industrial production to be important, and wanted her designs to be relevant for the day, she championed the hand loom. For her, as for many makers since then, the hand loom was crucial for experimenting with ideas, and developing both a flexible and technical expression (Weltge, 1993:97).

In the researcher's visits to the Bedouin weavers and arts and crafts institutions of Jordan (2003) it was found that the designers were responsible for drawing and the weavers for copying their patterns, in a manner similar to contemporary designers. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the images were depicted by famous painters

who made full-sized paintings called cartoons, which were then rigidly copied by highly skilled artisan-weavers. Thus, tapestries became mere copies of paintings, rather than independent works of art (Regensteiner, 1986:135). This is unlike the process at the Wissa Wassef Art School in Egypt, where the weavers are eight to ten year old children who produce pictorial and two dimensional woven objects. The process of weaving is based on learning the basic techniques and then commencing work without looking at preparatory drawings, copying other works of art or criticism by adults. Young weavers must follow these structures to be able to create their images freely, without any intervention or censorship (personal communication, July 20, 2003). This procedure is similar to the one applied by Saudi Bedouin weavers. They worked spontaneously when weaving without using pre-determined designs or drawings (interview with Bedouin weaver, September 2003).

The process of weaving which is used in Jordan, Egypt, and the western region of Saudi Arabia reinforces what Pye (1968:20-23) called "The workmanship of risk and the workmanship of certainty". He goes on to explain the meaning of this phrase and to define the difference between the statements. The 'workmanship of risk' applies when the quality of work or products after completion is not pre-determined, and this is in contrast to the workmanship of certainty. The quality of the result depends on many things, such as judgment, care and skill. These are taken into consideration by the maker during the process of production. The quality of the result of the workmanship of risk is subject to the effects of human intervention, particularly during the process of achievement, but in the workmanship of certainty the product is made by a planned sequence of operations. In addition, it is to be found in mass-production, where rapid manufacture is usually its purpose.

Since the 1950s, textiles as a medium have become more varied in purpose, from one - off experimental work, to mass produced functional materials. Yoko Imai (2002:128), Dormer (1997:169-170), and The Scottish Arts Council (1980:9) have all discussed the changes that have occurred in weaving, in terms of forms, techniques, designs and materials. For some, their work has become closer to fine art than to craft because of these transformations and displays a greater knowledge of the visual arts in general. The form and display of these works have changed from figurative to abstract, two

dimensional to sculpture, and wall hanging to freestanding pieces. The techniques of artists have also changed, in terms of using the way of cut and pile up ready made fabric, stiffening materials into sculpture forms and creating spaces by drawing lines with thread which droops under its own weight. Furthermore, artistic creations are influenced by scientific discovery and technological development, such as the advent of synthetic yarns in different thicknesses, textures and colours. In the late 1940s, for example, Robert D. Sailors, a Cranbrook graduate, began to experiment with the interplay of contradictory materials in his woven products. He wove together Cellophane and paper, wool and metal, or combined rayon warp and a Lurex weft and as a consequence, his experiments bore fruit in a successful range of furnishing fabrics for industry that had delicate, complex textures (Dormer, 1997:169). In addition to the use of synthetic threads in the field of weaving, the computer has been used, for instance to feed the coloured yarns to the shuttle and to speed up production. The British weaver Ann Sutton links a basic Apple Mac to her loom to produce samples of what she designs on computer (Dormer, 1997:170). So, each craft person has his or her own personal techniques. Beside that, the need for beautiful functional weaving has largely disappeared and offers wide opportunities for weavers and tapestry makers to create forms that provide aesthetic value rather than a functional purpose. Through these forms, creators can try to express their inner feelings, understand their abilities to explain their materials and work with the hands to see a form evolve (Fayoumy, 2000:24).

In the light of modernist movements, the researcher finds herself in the same situation as Morris, the Bauhaus weavers and later practitioners. The researcher is fascinated by the traditional Bedouin weaving of western Saudi Arabia, and has experimented, through the practical work of this study, with unconventional materials, testing their potential to vary the warp in woven objects influenced by Saudi traditional weaving. In addition, a new role has to be found for this work within the new urbanised society, in order to keep the skills and tradition alive.

Also, during her visits to Jordan and Egypt during the summer of 2003, it was found that the Jordanian weavers Habbsah (Oum- Bassamm) and Fattmah (Oum-Basemm) experimented with existing materials, such as shells, buttons, necklaces, pieces of

copper and embroidery techniques, to produce modern wall hangings (see plate 28-29), whereas Halah Al-Kauass, who is an Egyptian weaver, practiced with lace techniques and used ready-made objects and cellophane in her woven artefacts in order to produce unconventional pieces of weaving (see plate 30). The work of Saudi weaver Laila Badour (plate 31) is an attempt to apply geometrical patterns through the use of the cut and paste method. One may think that there is an ideological similarity between the researcher's own work in this study and Badour's work. The researcher believes there is a general similarity in the appearance of our woven artefacts, but our ideological approaches diverge. Badour's work is concerned with the use of geometrical patterns as inspiration for her design, whereas the researcher's work seeks to experiment with the potential for employing unconventional materials in hand weaving and to contribute to the development of this field. The uniqueness of Badour's work lies in the way that she creates her design. This is based on selecting one or two shapes from traditional weaving and then creating a new design. When the design is complete, she cuts it into equal length longitudinal strips, which she then reconstructs to obtain the final design. This differs from the work of the British weaver Jacqueline James. In James's work, entitled *Rug/Wall hanging* (plate 32), she blends together coloured yarns to achieve the desired effect, in a way which is similar to mixing paint. The artefacts of James and other British weavers, who were interviewed during the summer of 2003 and the winter of 2005, are an example of contemporary weaving and show their individuality in using different materials, techniques, designs and forms. See also the works of Fiona M. Banford (*Forget-Me-Knot* (2), plate 33); Helen Marlow (*Ode to Recycling*, 1994, plate 34); Margaret Ailing (*Life's Unraveling*, 2003, plate 35), and Sue Lawty (*One Beach*, 2004, wall piece, plate 36).

The entirety of the works of Arab and British contemporary weavers has influenced the researcher, as each has its specific techniques and approaches. Different approaches and materials are tested not only to produce woven artefacts, but also to create hand crafted objects, such as ceramics, jewellery and baskets.

Modernism has impacted on the field of arts and crafts in general, and weaving in particular, in terms of the novelty of shape, meaning and the use of different processes of weaving. The production of traditional Bedouin weaving in Saudi Arabia has

disappeared and has been replaced with industrial production, as mentioned earlier. Beautiful, hand woven products with their rich and aesthetic patterns and colours can be developed to meet the needs of urban society. In fact, Saudi Arabia is in the early stages of developing the field of weaving, whether hand or machine woven textile. The researcher believes that there is a need to establish workshop systems for both craft and industrial products and to learn how to develop these areas from the experiences of other cultures or countries, but the most important consideration in the workshop is the availability of Saudi weavers, as they are rare (and this is an arguable point). The workshop could be used as a laboratory to experiment with different weaves and materials that would be suitable for the urban home environment, similar to the way in which Bauhaus workshops worked. Through these workshops, affordable, durable, contemporary textiles were developed for a broad market (Weltge, 1993:97). Similarly, the workshops in the United States sought to create both useful and beautiful objects through the integration of art and industry (Bletter, 1995:108).

Ioannou (1997:14-15) reports that contemporary craft is the direct result of six thousand years or so of past humanity. The concept of craft has shifted and changed over the past two hundred years, and our perspective of what it contributes to society has also shifted and broadened. We understand that the history of craft has developed through different phases, each phase asserted and sustained by the social values and styles of the period. The cultural baggage which has accumulated along the way explains and characterises the present-day diversity and role of craft. It can be concluded that despite industry providing the vast proportion of our essential goods, contemporary craft activity has increased and still aims to provide functional items for daily life, such as tableware, furniture, clothing and jewellery.

2.4 New and Unconventional Materials

The third key theme of this study focuses on the use of new materials in the field of hand weaving. This is considered as an important element in the creative work of this study, where the researcher aimed to produce woven artefacts using unconventional and synthetic materials as alternatives for the warp and weft. Also, the use of this kind of

material is considered as a new aspect in traditional hand weaving in western Saudi Arabia.

It is understood that yarns, as well as the other equipment used in the weaving process, are very important to the weaver, and the issue of using traditional threads has been discussed by numerous authors. Previously, yarns were made of raw or natural fibres, such as wool, linen, cotton and silk. These materials have been in use for fifty centuries, but since 1920, different kinds of threads have been developed and manufactured in several colours, textures and sizes (Held, 1978:338). The weaver of today can order samples from all over the world. The hand weaver is attracted by synthetic fibres because of the intensity and brilliance of their colour. At the same time, they may also be available in different textures, under such names as boucle, loop and nub yarns (Regensteiner, 1986:37).

The production of synthetic threads is new in Saudi Arabia and their manufacture was initially limited to certain factories. For example, in 1999, the Bahlas factory produced several kinds of synthetic yarns, including acrylic, polymide and an all - polyester type of thread (Ministry of Information, 1998:20). But their use in textiles is still very limited.

The works of contemporary textile artists and weavers, whether in Arab or western countries, are not based on traditional fibres or materials, but include non-traditional and unconventional items, such as seashells, dried flowers and leaves, feathers, leather, bamboo sticks, plastic tubes and strips, paper rods, cloth remnants and metal wires. These are very different from the raw materials usually used for the warps in weaving (Blumenau, 1967:63). Unconventional materials are different from traditional or raw elements, which are obtained from natural fibres, as unconventional materials come mainly from things considered inappropriate for woven or other craft products (Fayoumy, 2000:90). Unconventional materials are understood to be those not adhering to convention and out of the ordinary.

Traditionally, crafted objects are made of natural materials, such as wool, clay, silk, metal and so on, but recently new materials have been used in the field of craft. These

materials may be recycled or found materials, found forms or found objects (Williams, 2002:61). Williams uses the term 'lasting value' to explain the meaning of these kinds of materials. Lasting value has a number of different meanings, for instance the possibility for increasing the longevity of an object through the use of a good kind of material or techniques, or finding a new view or alternative function for discarded or thrown away materials which no longer carry out their original function. Furthermore, it can apply to the preservation, rather than loss, of appraised tradition and convention when threatened by change from various quarters, whether social or economic (Williams, 2002:61).

The different studies and literature discussed in Section 2.2 argue in favour of the use of unconventional materials, as they are more readily available, easily obtained and inexpensive. Whilst collecting information about these kinds of materials, information from the Crafts Council and authors (1998:73) was obtained with reference to Astird Lovas and Kirsten Wagle. Both are among the foremost textile artists in Norway today and serve as an example of weavers who use crafts as a vehicle for self expression. Their approach is based on the use of second-hand clothing such as sailcloth, padded jackets and rainwear, to produce their tapestries. Recently, the use of ladies' nylon stockings was considered one of the most surprising things in their works. However, their approach may be very influential in areas related to current fine art practice.

In addition to these examples, the researcher found that producers of jewellery, baskets, and furniture often used new or unconventional materials in their works. Joanne Tinker is a British artist who makes a range of jewellery from chocolate foil wrappers; Lois Walpole is a British basketry maker who uses waste materials for making baskets; Walter Jack made a standard lamp from a French garden hoe (Taylor, 1996:52, 59, and 63). Unconventional materials are not restricted to the field of crafts as they are also useful in painting. For example, in the Cubism movement, Pablo Picasso's work entitled *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1911/12) is made of oil cloth and pasted paper, simulating chair caning on canvas (Abcgallery.com 2006). George Braque, in his work *Bottle, Newspaper, and Glass* (1913), used charcoal and various papers pasted onto paper (home.vs.moe.edu.sg 2006), whereas the Chinese contemporary artist Wenda Gu collects hair from barbershops around the world to create monuments for his work

entitle *United Nation Project*. Through his work, he attempts to make a statement about uniting people and creating a new racial identity. He also discusses the need to revive old traditions and reflects on the arguments about his unconventional ideas (asiaarts.ucla.edu 2006).

Herald, in his book *World Crafts* (1992:183-187), discusses the use of non-traditional materials in developing countries. He wrote that the use of this kind of material is not limited to western countries, but is also found amongst people in developing countries which depend on non-traditional materials to produce their crafts. Nowadays creative products made of cheap and available materials can be found using such materials as pre-consumed rejects from industry, woven outer clothing or waste materials. In Bangladesh, plastic strips are used to make crocheted hats. Also, the T Boli people of the Philippines use melted-down plastic combs, brass carburetors and taps to produce jewellery and figurines. Furthermore, in Haiti cement-bag papers, or flattened disused oil drums are employed to make models of painted Caribbean-style buses and houses. All these examples show that people's ability to produce something beautiful out of nothing will never cease, and that their skills are influenced by a wide variety of things, including the development of transport systems, communication, new technologies or materials and structures for the exchanging of commodities and products.

Based on these arguments, it was found that the use of unconventional materials in the field of crafts and fine art opens the door for crafts persons and artists to develop their skills and discover their ability to make artistic or functional work. At the same time, they can see what might be achieved through the use of other materials, whether discarded, throwaway, second hand, found or new.

2.5 Conclusion

The researcher was surprised at the small number of studies and books dealing with Saudi traditional weaving and concluded that the main implication of the literature review is that comprehensive studies and experiments are needed in the field of hand weaving in general and, in particular, traditional weaving in Saudi Arabia. Studies of

Saudi traditional weaving should focus on the following aspects: economics, education, experiments, artistic approach and the establishment of organisations or communities interested in crafts through collaborative action between educational institutions and concerned groups and individuals. This might assist in a revival and development of this kind of weaving.

As this study is concerned with Saudi traditional weaving, it is necessary and important to pay attention to intellectual and ideological fundamentals, which are concealed behind the appearance of inherited and traditional artistic creations. It is important to note the historical, environmental and geographical dimensions that bring forth or produce particular forms and artistic techniques, and at the same time limit their aesthetic functions.

The message that was learnt from the Art and Crafts and the Bauhaus movements is the importance of making relationships between man and machine, and the understanding that the machine can enrich both the practical and aesthetic levels in man's life, instead of denigrating his existence and his values. Also, the design and quality of craft objects are not influenced by modernist movements, but by the use and incorporation of new materials, freedom of form and size and the use of the computer. Furthermore, it is believed that it is possible to learn from Arab and British contemporary weavers, and their work generates in the researcher a sensation that she would like to explore in her own work.

Although weaving is still basically conventional in its construction - particularly its weave structures and methods - weavers can use different kinds of materials for the warp and the weft and draw their ideas from several sources, including nature, geometric patterns, archaeology, popular culture, comic strips, narratives and literature.

THE FOLLOWING PLATES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Chapter Two: Plates

CHAPTER THREE

THE APPLICATION OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND THE DOCUMENTATION OF PRACTICAL WORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the practical work and the programme that the researcher followed in developing the creative element of her thesis. The work experience and the reasons for selecting this material for her research are discussed. The researcher's approach towards the practice and the documentation of her work are also explained.

3.2 The Researcher's Background

At the beginning of the researcher's adult life in Makkah city, where she come from, she studied at the University of Oum Al-Qura to be an English teacher. However, her life's journey was changed by the opening of an Art Education department at the University, where she embarked upon a course. All students took a preliminary course before moving on to a specialist subject, including interior design, weaving and printing, pottery, painting, graphic design and craft work.

The researcher's interest in textiles began in the fourth year of her study. She found it both fascinating in itself and also as a fluid vehicle through which to express her ideas. Having taught weaving in the Art department of the University for a few years after obtaining her Bachelor's degree, she specialised in hand weaving and printing, and then continued into a post-graduate year in order to gain her MA degree. Her MA degree developed out of her ceramic and pottery studies, as she became fascinated with the techniques used for achieving high and low relief on ceramic objects, and with the structures for making sculptures in three dimensions. At this stage, she began to think about the achievement of low and high relief in woven artefacts, and the connection that might be made between the field of weaving and that of two or three dimensions came to her mind.

The starting point was to look for materials relevant to the field of high and low relief and three dimensions, whether in weaving or other subjects, from different sources, such as books, magazines, journals, and articles. The researcher occasionally attended exhibitions outside Saudi Arabia, and looked at relevant works by practitioners who

were interested in producing relief tapestry or weaving (Tsipora Levy, Diane Kirk, Magdalena Abakanowiez, Myriam Gilby, and Weddad Jadd). To build up her personal work, the researcher needed to gain a deep understanding of materials. In making her woven objects, she tries to apply what she has learnt about high and low relief techniques and three or two dimensional structures. In order to create woven artefacts influenced by high and low relief, she used techniques such as:

- Creating a particular metal frame loom.
- Using extra warps on the surface of the piece of weaving.
- Fixing an external woven piece into the surface of the weaving after it was finished.
- Employing rug techniques.

As a result of her post graduate work, the researcher was awarded a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom to gain a PhD degree. As a consequence, she considered herself fortunate, as it is a great opportunity to obtain more information about the field of craft in general and the textiles or weaving media in particular, in terms of techniques and method, forms and materials, through attending and visiting libraries, museums, and exhibitions.

The researcher's interest in Saudi traditional Bedouin weaving started when she was a teenager. Its wonderful decorative patterns, rich colour, and both complicated and simple weave structures have particularly inspired her to consider how Bedouin women weavers can produce work in such a fascinating way. The technique is representative of the highly skilled Bedouin weaver who adapted herself to a harsh life and was satisfied to live with little. However, the researcher became more interested during the fourth level of her MA, when she produced a piece of weaving influenced by the Saudi tradition as a requirement of the course. She faced difficulties in gaining the relevant information because this kind of weaving is not common in Saudi society, and is also not known in the west, not because it is antique, but because this kind of weaving is not seen often in the western market place. Therefore, it is belived that there is a lack of references and studies in this field. Urgent action is required to find a way to develop and preserve this kind of craft.

When the researcher came to the UK, she found that great changes had taken place in the field of arts and crafts during the industrial revolution and the movement towards modernity established during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast, the industrial revolution, the importation of cheap manufactured items and the loss of labour to the oilfields are considered to be the causes of great change in the Bedouin lifestyle and sounded the death knell for traditional handicrafts, particularly traditional weaving (Ross, 1985:118). Furthermore, during interviews with Bedouin weavers in their dwellings in 2003, they mentioned that trade with the outside world had contributed to the decline in crafts, and this in turn resulted in a difficulty in finding various types of craft work. Besides that, people became uninterested in producing this kind of craft work, as they were preoccupied with new-found interests, such as learning and studying and working in education and governmental employment. Both Hilden (1988:8) and Baduor (1996:22) discuss the changes which have happened in the Bedouin lifestyle. Badour wrote that the lifestyle of Bedouin people changed from a dispersed and nomadic culture to an urbanised, semi- industrial and commercial way of life. Hilden commented that one sees many plastic bags, rugs, curtains and complete white canvas tents in widespread use alongside manufactured goods of different shapes and sizes, all at low prices, which have flooded the market and are widely used, along with inexpensive ready-made clothes which can be purchased anywhere. Both cheap and expensive clothes imported from western countries or manufactured in the Arab world or the Orient are available for purchase. This contrasts with Morocco, where they have improved the technique of weaving, including dyeing, and encouraged freedom of expression in the use of design and texture (Jereb, 1995:48, 51). Similarly, some areas of Africa, such as the Congo and Mali, still practice the craft of weaving (Meyer, 1994:68).

Albert de Boucheman confirms these changes in his article where he comments “Western civilisation is gaining ground in the desert and accelerating the decline of the nomadic” (Mauger, 1991:100). In the researcher’s opinion, Bedouin society would have changed even without the discovery of oil, though the changes would have happened at a slower rate and come in smaller ways as well as larger ones. With the arrival of western companies in the Saudi desert in search of oil, gas, and minerals, King Abdal-

Aziz, in 1944, approached the United States for assistance and the Kingdom was provided with technical experts in order to identify and designate the kingdom's natural resources. Since then, the life of the Bedouin has changed rapidly. They left herding to work in oil installations, replaced their camels with tanker trucks to carry water to their herds of sheep and camels, moved from their black tents to concrete homes, and many of them have enrolled in schools and universities (Nawwab, 1995:256).

Previously, handicrafts in the western region of Saudi Arabia, including construction, clothing and metalworking (coffee pots, swords, daggers, or silver jewellery), were directed at supporting urban and Bedouin social needs, whereas weaving, embroidery and traditional costumes were to be found in the mountain areas, within villages, and in the villages of the lowland area of the Hijaz. Handicrafts in the western region of Saudi Arabia, particularly the craft of hand weaving, are influenced by other cultures such as Africa, Egypt, India, Turkey and China. This is because of the prime location of the Hijaz (western region of Saudi Arabia) as a trade road between the north and south, and as the homeland of the holy cities (Ross, 1985:86-88). For example, weaving and design reflected both the Oriental and the East African techniques. In the Hijaz and further north, the Z twist is mostly used in woven twining techniques, and twined tapestry is often mixed with other types of weaving, for instance, the soumak brocading that can be found on accessory items. Geometric designs give them a distinctly Arabian quality. The general layout of these designs shows some affinity to Africa rather than to the Middle East (Topham, 1982:22-23). Traditional weaving was discussed earlier in chapter two and in the appendix A.

These factors led the researcher to think about the kind of contribution she might offer to Saudi traditional weaving. The idea of making a connection between tradition and modernity has inspired her to think about how the traditional Bedouin weaving in the western region of Saudi Arabia can be developed. To achieve these ideas, the researcher began to identify her resources and decided that the use of unconventional and synthetic materials as alternatives to the warp and weft of Saudi traditional weaving, combined with the weave structures and decorative patterns of Saudi traditional weaving, would give her the greatest scope for achieving the effect she wanted. The use of this technique

will contribute to the development of this kind of weaving, and at the same time produce a creative artefact that serves both an artistic and aesthetic purpose, rather than striving for functionality. The researcher wishes her own artworks to offer a blend of traditional Saudi weaving with modernity.

3.3 The Researcher's Approach to her Practice

During her undergraduate degree, she practiced the traditional method of using cotton or linen threads for the warp and natural fibres for the weft to produce woven artefacts with two dimensions. When she began her MA project, her approach shifted in terms of form and appearance, as mentioned in section 3.2 of this chapter. The main feature of her work during both BA and MA degrees was geometric patterns and abstract images. This kind of image is an attractive medium for many weavers. In fact, there was no specific reason for using these kinds of design, but it could be a practical reason, or her passion for these images that allow a variety of patterns to be woven using simple geometric shapes. It is also possible to create powerful imagery in tapestry and woven artefacts through the use of pictorial images, whether representational or abstract.

Whilst collecting information about contemporary weaving, it was found that new materials have been employed in the field of crafts, including weaving. These materials are often used for the weft of weaving, or on the surface of the completed article (Blumenau, 1967:62). The use of unconventional materials as a contemporary aspect in the field of weaving, alongside colourful traditional Bedouin weaving and its decorative patterns, provides both the motivation and inspiration for the practical work of this study. Consequently, an experimentation with this kind of material as an alternative for the warp of traditional Bedouin weaving was decided upon.

The researcher's approach towards the practical work focused on gathering relevant information concerned with Saudi traditional and contemporary weaving, and selecting the main materials to use in her work. These included paper, metal wire, netting bags, plastic or cloth strips, bamboo, wooden rods, plastic tubes, or existing objects such as tablemats or curtains that came from a wide variety of sources including friends,

colleagues, neighbors, skips, supermarkets and domestic stores. Alongside this, the researcher feels that drawing is central to her creative work, because through drawing she can judge proportions and understand tone and the strengths of light and shade. Her sketchbook is the key element of her artwork. It prompts ideas and action, and also acts as a reflective tool. It contains tonal studies and drawings. As her designs are based on geometrical patterns, she prefers to work out the shapes on graph paper and use coloured pens as a key, linking the symbols in the squares to actual samples of the yarns. The vertical lines on the paper represent the warp and the horizontal lines represent the weft.

It is useful to set up a checklist of tasks alongside sketchbooks (diagram 37) to help in the planning of each piece of work. This acts as a guide through the process of translating an inspiring source or material into the actual woven artefact, and at the same time gives the researcher a disciplined framework and greater focus. In addition to using her sketchbook, she looked at other weavers, particularly those who used unconventional materials in their work, such as Egyptian weaver Halah Al-Kauass, Jordanian weavers Habbsah (Oum-Bassamm) and Fattmah (Oum-Basemm), and the British weavers Margaret Ailing, Helen Marlow, and Sue Lawty. Sue Lawty and Halah Al-Kauass are the two weavers who have influenced her most through their approaches, use of materials and the way in which they express their creativity. The researcher is interested in their works because they share something with her own; they use the same materials. Unconventional materials are a key theme in this project. They appeared following changes in the field of arts and crafts during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The use of this kind of material was not limited to woven work, but was also employed, for example, in jewellery and basket making, and in painting, as mentioned in section 2.4 chapter two. The use of unconventional materials is related to its availability, obtainability and relatively low cost. In fact, craftspeople can transform the identity of this kind of material into an object of art, as explained earlier.

It is understood that reflection is an essential part of the researcher's practical based research. It offers an explanation of how her work has developed and how the process of reflection acts as a focal point in this kind of study. The production phase is achieved in the light of information gathered and reflected upon, in the way that Schon describes

(1983). Throughout this process, the researcher identifies: what is to be made, in what way and from where, the design idea, source of the material, the technique to be used and the way the source material is to be recorded. These questions have enabled her to explore and clarify the aims of her study and her intentions in producing the artwork. Several techniques were used as aides memoires for reflection, including documenting, describing and discussing her aims and intentions at the beginning of a piece of work and after obtaining all information relevant to subject matter. Furthermore, the researcher documented and described how the work was informed by theoretical and artistic influences to help her understand how these materials influenced her practice and the effects of practice on her understanding. The way in which producing the work involved elements of traditional weaving was also explored. The researcher did not intend to copy traditional Bedouin weaving exactly, but to translate the visual impression it makes through her own creative senses, borrowing techniques and embellishments, and thus producing a new type of woven object.

As a weaver, the researcher does not think of traditional woven objects as utilitarian items, but as an art form. Thus, she selects her materials, yarns, weave structure and colour to serve an end and to keep in mind whilst working on a project, what she wanted her finished product to look and feel like.

In order to find out whether the work produced has the anticipated effect on the viewer, to understand the strengths and weaknesses of her artefact, and to try to find solutions to the problems she faced when weaving, each artefact needed to be evaluated. The process of evaluation was partly based on interviews with visitors to the exhibition, held in the Lanchester Gallery at the University of Coventry School of Art and Design, from 24th April 2006 to 4th May 2006, and on evaluation forms about the work (see appendix E). Each visitor was asked on entering the exhibition if he or she was able or willing to be interviewed.

When starting a new artefact, the researcher bears in mind many things that are relevant to the conventions of decorative or fine arts, as these help in the process of developing her woven objects. The first consideration is a concern with the size and scale of the work. The proportion or scale is a crucial consideration for achieving good design. As

scale relates to the purpose and function of the woven object, the researcher has to think about where it will be used and whether the work will be in two or three dimensions, because a hanging may be lost when viewed across a room. Work such as wall hangings and framed weaving will be viewed from one direction, whereas lighting units and partitions will be viewed from all sides. When considering scale, it should be understood that the work of a small woven object requires a different treatment of design than a large one. The weaver or artist must keep in mind the proportion of the individual elements in order to achieve good design and scale. Visually, the design needs to relate to the size. This means that the design elements of a large woven object can not simply be transposed onto smaller ones. Consequently, the emphasis of a design can alter. Due to the kinds of material used by the researcher, it was found that the length and limitation on the quantity of materials had an impact on shape, form, size and design.

Choosing colour is the most complex of the elements of image, and much has been written about it. Johnston and Kaufman (1967), Bridgman (1991), Regensteiner (1986), Jerstorp and Kohlmark (1986), Znamierowski (1973) and Gilby (1976), for example, argued the issue of colour from different points of view, but in the end all agreed that the reaction to colour and the construction of a personal palette is highly individual.

The researcher's personal choice of colour in the construction of her woven artefacts is based on an understanding of the colour wheel, studying the colour work of weavers and textile artists and coloured photographs of traditional Bedouin woven work. She has to bear in mind that colours can not be seen in isolation to their surroundings and must take into account aspects such as size, shape, texture, light and shade and the other colours her work will be seen with. Having considered all these aspects, she start to build up her sketchbook, using traditional Bedouin weaving images to serve as both colour and pattern references. To select just the part of a picture she liked, she used a cut-out, similar to a card weaving frame, of about 5×5cm, or 2×2cm, and moved it over the picture until she found something of interest within the cut-out area. The process of colour selection is begun by constructing a palette of the colour. In choosing her colours, she found that they formed a colour scheme that fitted into two of these harmonies: analogous and contrast. To match the paint, she made thread by wrapping

and winding yarns around strips of white paper and mounting it on a page of her sketchbook.

Having studied the work of Arab and British weavers it was found that, generally speaking, Arab weavers tend to use mixed warm and cool tones in a colourful way, whereas British weavers use pastel or cool colours in their work. The difference between the approaches raised a question about the impact of the sun and light qualities on colour selection. The weaver Myriam Gilby, in her book *Free Weaving*, (1976:38) explored her personal reaction to colour when she came to England to study art. Her fondness for exotic colour derived from her childhood in southern India, where the colours were startling and extremely contrasting. The colours of nature, the countryside, traditional costumes (saris) and houses echoed this vividness. In comparison, the muted grey environment of the London suburbs was extremely difficult for her to adjust to and the response to the colours of her home land was very slow to come. Consequently, she chose to study form and sculpture rather than painting and colour. However, her interest in colour was reawakened when she moved to Lancashire. She was influenced by the mill town architecture and the bleakness of the surrounding moor land with the ever-changing nuances of light and shadow.

Apart from the elements and principles of design, texture and symmetry are central to the researcher's weaving and give scope for interpreting her ideas. It is understood that texture means the correlation or interrelationship between both visual and tactile senses, and also assists in balancing shapes. In her practical work the researcher has used different methods to achieve the element of texture, including the effective contrast of spacing, size of shapes and lines, the use of textured yarns such as looped or pile threads, and also various techniques, like carpet knotting (plate 45) twining, chaining and plain weave structure. In addition to these techniques, it was found the use of different valued (the degree of lightness or darkness) coloured yarns can also give the feeling of a rough or smooth appearance. This is because a sleek surface reflects the light which falls on it from different angles, whereas the texture of harsher yarns absorbs the light, making the surface look darker than one of soft or fine threads. The surface of the researcher's woven objects, for example, appears dark, even though primary and secondary colours are used. However, the different effects that arise from

using threads in complementary colours, such as green and red, offers interesting results. The artefact in plate 47 features the effect of these two colours. Their use in large and bold shapes gives a feeling of seeing them separately, but at the same time they reinforce one another. The eye will perceive their effect in a different way if they are used in much smaller areas, and their effect may be disconcerting, with an unpleasant friction between the two colours.

The final consideration for the researcher is whether to use symmetry or asymmetry, both of which can give balance to a design. Symmetry and asymmetry are evident in her practical work. For instance, the use of a mirrored image, various sizes and shapes, and their relation to a central point create a feeling of balance. Also, adding tassels or fringes onto the bottom edges of woven artefacts, warping the cut warp ends with coloured wool, or weaving the warp ends creates a sense of visual movement, where the flowing coloured threads of the woven object lead the eye towards the bottom. Warped or woven tassels also serve as moving from texture, carrying the eye vertically over the surface, whilst they also provide points of emphasis in ascending and descending rhythm.

3.4 Documenting Practical Work

This section focuses on a description of the researcher's creative work. Her practical artefacts consist of a series of weavings examining different kinds of unconventional materials, such as plastic or paper tubes and plastic, wooden and cloth strips. Through action and practice, each work produced created something new and surprising and this led her to experiment with the same kind of material to explore its potential by producing different forms or designs. The woven objects are divided into two types: two dimensional and three dimensional, and include wall hangings, tablemats, lighting units and partitions.

The aim of employing elements of traditional weaving in her practical work was not to precisely copy or simulate Bedouin techniques, but to translate the visual impression they produce through her creative sense and, by borrowing their techniques and

embellishments, to invent a modern or unconventional woven object. Therefore, she needed to keep in mind what she wanted her finished product to look and feel like whilst she worked on each project.

Traditional Bedouin weaving is made of raw and natural materials derived from animals and plants, and is centered on making objects suitable for use in Bedouin society, where it is functional and practical. The woven artefacts of this study mainly use elements of traditional weaving, such as plain, twining and chaining weave structures, and geometrical patterns. Unconventional materials, including straws, wood, paper tubes and cloth and plastic strips, are used for the warp. These materials can be new, throwaway, discarded, or second hand. Synthetic threads of different textures, types and colours were also used for the weft. The practical work of this research aimed to achieve two goals. The first was to create woven items influenced by traditional Bedouin weaving of the western region of Saudi Arabia and to meet the requirements of an urban community, such as decoration or exhibition. The other was to test and understand the potential of unconventional material for creative weaving. The woven objects produced are two and three-dimensional as well as flat weave.

In the documentation of the researcher's practical work, she describes in detail the work that was not as successful as she hoped and which surprised her, such as the first, second and the third artefacts, and offers a general description of the rest of her work.

The first artefact (see plate 38)
Type of artefact: Vase or sculpture, 2003.
Size: 70 × 48 × 15cm.
Materials used: Plastic tubes, synthetic yarns of different colours and textures.

On the commencement of the practical work of this study, the researcher chose to use plastic tubes to produce a wall hanging. The use of material is always important to the weaver or textile artist because it allows them to express their ideas freely. It is important to them to make use of this material in a new world of visual and tactile responses. Through this woven artefact, the researcher aimed to achieve three goals. The first was to produce a woven object influenced by traditional Bedouin weaving.

The second was to explain her idea of combining different kinds of material in the work. The third was to discover the impact of the use of these materials on weaving, particularly on traditional Bedouin weaving. Using the tent wall decoration as a source of inspiration, a twining weave structure and contrasting colours, such as orange and blue, were used to produce this work, and plastic tubes of similar size and length were used for the warp. The use of textured yarns helps to achieve an overall pattern on the surface in contrast to the flatness of the twining weave. This in turn produces a decorative textured surface.

Unfortunately, this piece of weaving was unsuccessful because the internal tensions caused it to curl up rather than stay flat. The researcher understood why this happened only after studying and understanding traditional methods, with regard to the role of weave structures and the method of forming geometrical patterns. To solve the curling problem, the researcher thought of two solutions: wooden sticks might be attached at the top and bottom on the back of the weaving upon its completion, or this work could be considered as having potential for other forms, such as lighting units, vases or sculptures, rather than as a wall hanging. The second and the third ideas were most acceptable to the researcher, because the curling shape did not seem to her to be suitable for use as a wall hanging. Consequently, the form of the work shifted to a vase or sculpture instead of a wall hanging. The new form of the piece of weaving enabled this artefact to succeed. This piece of weaving was begun by twining different coloured and textured wefts over straws. The difference between colour and texture creates excitement in a simple shape. For aesthetic purposes, crochet cords ending with beads and woolled rings were fixed onto the weaving surface.

The second artefact (see Plate 39)
Type of artefact: Wall hanging, 2004.
Size: 100 × 48 cm.
Materials used: Wooden tablemat and synthetic thread of different colours, thicknesses and textures.

Having produced the ‘unsuccessful’ piece of weaving, described above, experimentation with existing or ready-made objects was trialled. For example, a

tablemat made of wooden strips jointed together by twining was used to produce a wall hanging. The first step in the process was to collect unconventional materials from friends, relatives, and neighbors. The researcher explained her purpose to them and asked them to keep these materials for her. One neighbor offered her a tablemat made of thin wooden strips twined together. She believed she could use this tablemat in her work because the wooden strips were joined together in such a way as to be suitable for use as the warp of a piece of weaving. She also believed that the inclusion of the mats would provide a useful challenge for her, by acting as 'grit' might to an oyster, making it harder for her work to achieve unity and coherence. The unconventional material therefore acted as a creative prompt.

The wall hanging was to be made with just a few tools, in accordance with the traditional Bedouin weaving technique known as twining (see chapter two). Three ready-made wooden tablemats and synthetic threads of different colours, thickness and textures were used for the weaving. The wooden tablemat was stretched onto a wooden frame to create space between each wooden strip, so as to allow the weft thread to be passed through using a weaving needle.

When looking at this wall hanging it became apparent that the first and third tablemats were similar. The wooden warps were covered completely by weave structures and geometrical patterns, but the warps of the second tablemat were left completely unwoven in sections as an organic part of the design and to create a balance between the parts of the artefact. For aesthetic purposes, woven strips and wrapped warps ending with black fringes were added onto the bottom and both sides of the wall hanging, and crochet techniques were applied to the surface of the object for a decorative finish. This can be achieved by making a length of crochet cord and sewing it onto the finished piece of weaving.

The ready-made material selected was easily adapted and simplified the weaving process because it was not necessary to attach the warps to a structure in preparation for weaving. This enabled the work to commence more directly. It was necessary to determine the number of warps in the artefact and to design a pattern that was consistent with this number. When the researcher worked on this piece of weaving, she was

confronted with a problem relating to the total number of wooden strips. Weft twining structure is based on a number of warps, which must be odd (3, 5, 11…), but in this case the number of wooden strips was even and it was not possible to add or remove any of them.

The third artefact (see Plate 40)
Type of artefact: Wall hanging, 2004.
Size: 100 × 100cm
Materials used: Plastic strips, synthetic wool of different textures and colours, and bin bags.

This artefact sought to explore the potential of another material, plastic strips, as a warp for creating a wall hanging. This material was found amongst rubbish in the road in Birmingham city, where the researcher lived, and she immediately saw the potential for her weaving. In March 2004, a wall hanging was produced by using synthetic wool threads of different colours and textures, geometrical patterns for decoration and twining structure for the weaving. To make the plastic strips suitable for use as warp threads, they were fixed to a wooden rod. Twining, one of the structures of Bedouin weaving, was used to weave the triangle and diamond shapes decorating the work. Both of these are geometrical shapes also taken from Bedouin designs. When the work was complete, it was found to be unattractive and unexciting. It seemed bland and lacked visual tension. The researcher liked the practical side, using throwaway materials and artificial woolen yarns of various colours and textures, but at the same time felt uncomfortable with the finished article. She felt that something was not right about its size and general shape, although she could not put her thoughts into words at the time. Through this work, she aimed to produce an unconventional tapestry and to break previous rhythms and introduce new elements, but initially it failed to achieve her aims. It was only after seeing the different images and forms of Arab and British contemporary weavers that she made more changes to the appearance of her weaving by adding woven warps at both sides of the piece. These extra warps were made by cutting plastic strips from bin bags of at least two metres in length, folded double and looped onto the wooden rod.

Having completed the weaving, it was found that:

- The selected materials were appropriate as a warp. At the same time, it was possible to control the warp number, since as many warps as are required for a design can be added.
- The material is suitable as a warp when twining or chaining (off-loom) weaving is employed.
- Although the appearance of this piece was unexceptional, the artificial threads of different textures, such as the fluffy yarns, produced high and low relief and added aesthetic value to the wall hanging.
- In the opinion of a colleague, who works as an interior designer, the orange was too strong and could perhaps be changed to dark or light orange, brown or beige. The designer's comment might have helped, but it was impossible to change the orange for technical reasons. All the threads would have to be undone because they were attached to one another at the back of the weaving.
- Adding pieces of clay onto the ends of the plastic strips was a good and easy solution for securing the weft threads. Also, adding fringes ending with beads onto the bottom of this wall hanging was a suitable way to hide the clay pieces.

The key thing learnt from these three artefacts was that mistakes are as valuable as successes. One helps with learning and growth, and the other provides encouragement to find solutions to the problems faced whilst working.

The other thing that became apparent was the creative potential of using an unconventional item as part of a traditional construction. It acts as a focus for difficulty to be overcome, both practically and often visually (even though it can be buried into the weaving), and upsets the pattern of production established in the ongoing practice. In working to overcome this problem, the researcher was forced to consider new answers and approaches to previously understood processes.

In addition, viewers of the work can also see a ‘rupture’ in the continuity of the weaving, buried within the artefact. This can create a sense of unease and discomfort, which unsettles preconceptions and assumptions on their part. This is a process which is commonly used either subtly or overtly by fine artists and is a well understood mechanism in that discipline. Here, it is applied to a contemporary representation of traditional Bedouin weaving.

General Description of the Rest of the Researcher’s Practical Work

From the fourth artefact to eleventh artefact (see Plates 41 to 48)

These woven artefacts were produced using other kinds of unconventional materials, such as cloth remnants, plastic strips, magazine paper and corobuff paper, with a combination of synthetic wools of different thickness and textures, and also with beads and transparent thread. Having thought about using these materials, the researcher decided to produce a series of lighting units, tablemats, wall hangings and partitions.

The woven artefacts were inspired by traditional Bedouin objects, such as coffeepot holders, storage bags and rugs. The colour and decorative patterns of the traditional pieces are attractive to the researcher, so she decided to use diamonds and triangles as decorative patterns for her own work. She was also interested in issues of geometry and symmetry.

In order to make the drinking straws usable as warp threads, they were joined together with beads and transparent thread to produce a structure for the tablemat. Cotton threads were used to fix straws or plastic tubes around a metal frame to make the lampshade (plate 41).

The fourth and fifth artefacts (see plates 42, and 43) show woven objects produced using cloth and plastic strips with combinations of geometrical patterns and weave structures such as warp-faced plain and twining. Plate 42 shows cloth remnants used to produce a framed weaving. When the researcher visited her country in 2004, her sister-in-law gave her a piece of linen. The possibility of using this material for the warp of

the personal work of this study came to mind. This piece of cloth was immediately cut into long, narrow ribbons and then plied with a spindle to make them thinner and stronger.

The key to this piece of weaving is the use of cloth strips as warps instead of weft. Cloth strips as wefts are widespread in products such as Egyptian Kilim. In order to make the artefact a framed weaving, a wooden board is covered with a piece of cloth used for a background and the whole piece is framed with green.

Whilst using cloth remnants to produce framed weaving, a three-section clothes airer and some plastic strips inspired the researcher to produce the sixth artefact. This artefact aimed to create a partition (see plate 43). The idea behind this partition derives from the dividing curtain used in Bedouin tents as a separation between the men and women's sections. In October 2005, this piece was woven with these materials, adopting the weft twining and plain weave structure over plastic strips for both sides. The plastic strips used to generate the seventh artefact (see plate 44) are different from those used in the partition. This material is normally used for binding blocks together on building sites, but, for the researcher, it became an integral part of her work. She happened upon these strips thrown on the pavement and picked up a fist full of this strange new building element. Out of this innocuous material came three panels which used plain weave structure and synthetic threads of different colours and textures. A wooden frame was used to anchor the materials and the woven artefact was fixed onto the wooden frame in order to avoid the object curling up and the weft threads coming off easily. Hairy and plain yarns were used to add texture to the wall hanging.

The same construction that was used to make a tablemat and lamp shade was employed to produce the eighth artefact. It is a wall hanging made of magazine paper (plate 45). In order to make tubes of this material, the pages were curled. Beads and silk threads were used to join the tubes together to produce a structure for the wall hanging and also to create a space between the paper tubes in order to pass the weft yarns easily through the paper warp. To add different textures to this woven artefact, knotted carpet and plain weave structures were used.

Through the use of corobuff paper and synthetic threads of different colour and texture, the researcher aimed to produce artefact number nine, which presented a two-dimensional wall hanging with lighting units, at the same time as creating a new form, design and appearance for traditional Bedouin weaving (plate 46, 46.1). The wall hanging consisted of four pieces made separately, but that are exhibited as one piece, where one can see the lines of design matching the weaving. The two- dimensional objects were produced using Saudi traditional weaving structures (plain weave structure). Red and black beads were utilised to add an aesthetic value to the appearance of the woven objects.

In 2006, the tenth woven artefact was produced (Plate 47) which was intended to combine tradition with modernity. Weaving is the interlacing of warp ends, the threads that generally run from top to bottom of a piece, with weft threads that are woven from side to side, but in this artefact plastic tubes were used for the warps, which was quick and inexpensive. The use of this technique helped the researcher to transform this material into an artistic design with the aid of selected and mixed synthetic threads, tassels and fringes. Upon completion, the piece of weaving was fixed onto wooden rods at the top and bottom, on the back of the weaving, for use as a wall hanging.

In reflecting upon this work the researcher recognised that she had pitched her initial idea of combining tradition and modernity at a very literal level. In retrospect she realises that this was a key theme within her practice and that in some of the more successful weaving this was achieved in a more subtle and pervasive fashion. The researcher recognises the difference between a crudely formed intention framed at the outset of a piece of work, and the realisation of that intention through the act of making, where the process acts upon and develops an idea. This can be termed ‘intelligent making’.

The potential of the plastic strips used in the partition was also explored for making the eleventh artefact. This woven item aimed to produce a wall hanging (plate 48). The hanging was constructed on a wooden frame and utilised both traditional weaving structures and a plastic sheet cut into thin strips measuring 1cm each. Once the hanging was complete, cords made of crochet were sewn onto the surface and wrapped and

woven tassels were added to the bottom for aesthetic purposes. The final shape and appearance of this artefact helped to transform the prior identity of the plastic strips beyond recognition.

The main challenge of the practical work in this research was to convert and change the identities and characters of unconventional materials and to transform simple materials into artistic designs with the aid of a mix of selected synthetic threads, beads, metal wire, tassels, fringes, rug knots and crochet. Put simply, the researcher decided to combine traditional weaving and unconventional materials to see what could be achieved. After reflecting upon her creative output, and in discussion with others, the researcher realised that what she had done had an application within an educational context. This linked back to her specific educational background and the desire to advocate the value of traditional Bedouin weaving

As a result, a CD concerned with the researcher's practical work was created to explore the construction of the woven wall hanging. This could be used as a tool for educational purposes, alongside a second CD, which was made to record the exhibition and woven artefacts and to provide a wider context for the first.

3.5 Conclusion

The key thing learnt from making these woven objects was that it is possible to integrate the elements of traditional Bedouin weaving with modern or new materials. In so doing, the researcher has studied and considered the natural and historical materials and elements of this tradition and has challenged the way in which we see and react to other resources and materials, and also how we relate to the object. As the process of reflection plays a major role in this study, the information obtained about traditional Bedouin weaving, modern weaving and new materials was applied in order to develop the practical work of this research. It is interesting to work with different kinds of material because the results can be new, exciting and unexpected, but as the practice and research progressed, the researcher came to recognise two key drivers of the practical work. The first was a desire to bring to wider attention the woven artefacts of the Saudi

Bedouin by re-presenting them in contemporary form. The second was a desire to extend tradition by fusing traditional work with contemporary materials, thus invigorating and strengthening the tradition.

In conclusion, the practical work is characterised by an emphasis on the hand made woven artefact, a concern for infusing tradition with modernity and a passion for advocating the potency of traditional Bedouin weaving. It offers the viewer the chance to see Saudi Bedouin weaving through a contemporary re-framing and re-presentation of that way of working, and at the same time asks questions about the role of traditional crafts in modern society.

CHAPTER THREE: PLATES

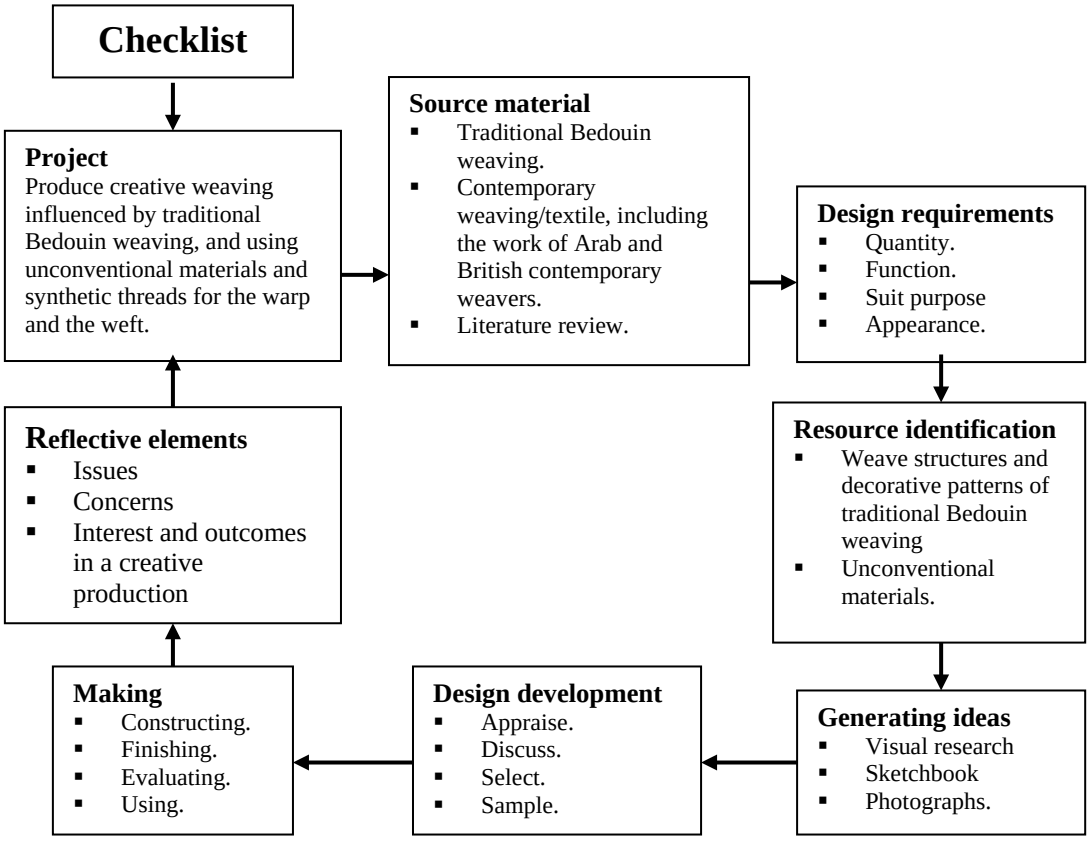

Checklist
Project
Produce creative weaving influenced by traditional Bedouin weaving, and using unconventional materials and synthetic threads for the warp and the weft.
Source material
Traditional Bedouin weaving.
Contemporary weaving/textile, including the work of Arab and British contemporary weavers.
Literature review.
Design requirements
Quantity.
Function.
Suit purpose
Appearance.
Resource identification
Weave structures and decorative patterns of traditional Bedouin weaving
Unconventional materials.
Generating ideas
Visual research
Sketchbook
Photographs.
Design development
Appraise.
Discuss.
Select.
Sample.
Making
Constructing.
Finishing.
Evaluating.
Using.
Reflective elements
Issues
Concerns
Interest and outcomes in a creative production

Diagram 37

Plate 38, Vase or sculpture, 2003. L. Salaghor.

Size: 70 ×48 × 15cm.

Materials used: Plastic tubes, synthetic yarns of different colour and textures.

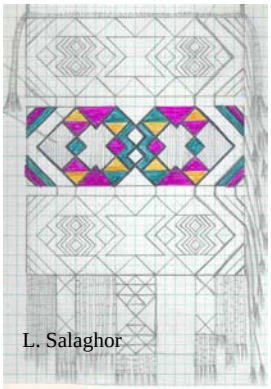
Plate 39, Wall hanging, 2004. L. Salaghor.

Size: 100 × 100cm.

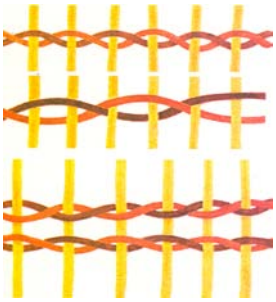
Materials used: Wooden tablemates, synthetic wool in various textures and colour.

Wall Hanging

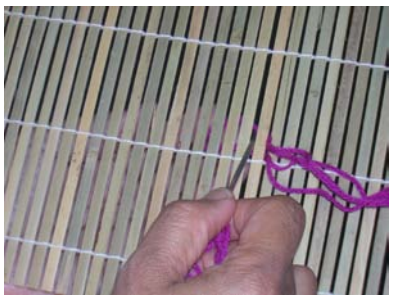
Al-Essaa, 1998:29

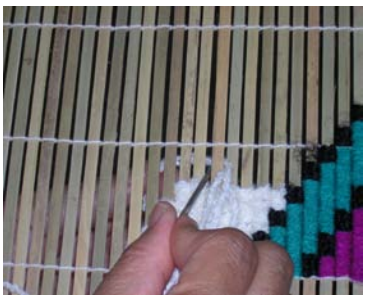


L. Salaghor



Pearson, 1984:16

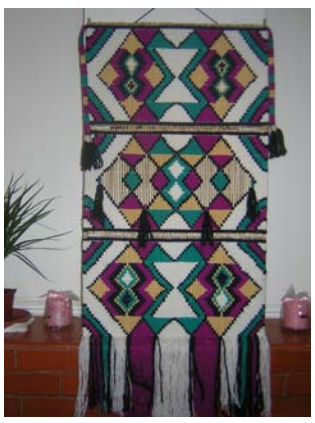




Photographs, L. Salaghor

Plate 39.1

Refers to previous plate. Details of construction of the second artefact.



Photograph, L. Salaghor

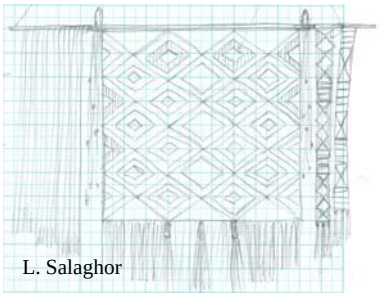
Plate 40, Wall hanging, 2004. L. Salaghor.

Size: 100 × 100cm.

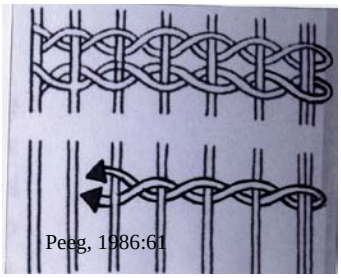
Materials used: Plastic strips, synthetic wool of different colour and textures, beads and bin bags.

Wall Hanging

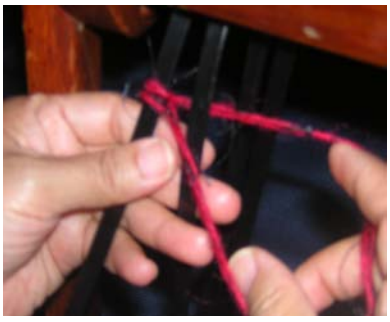
Photographs, L. Salaghor



L. Salaghor



Peeg, 1986:61



Photograph, L. Salaghor

Plate, 40.1

Refers to previous plate. Details of construction of the Third artefact.

Plate 41, Tablemat and lampshade, 2004, L. Salaghor.

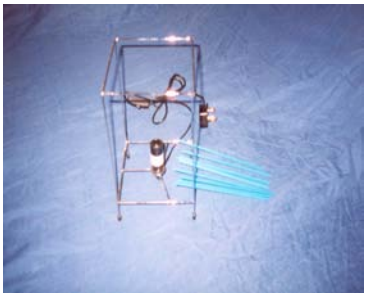
Size: The tablemat is measured 60 ×21 cm, and the size of the lampshade is 24 × 66 × 17 cm.

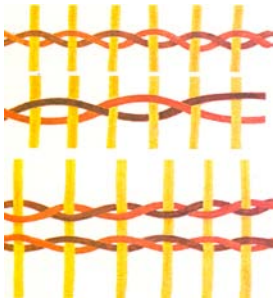
Material used: Drinking straws, synthetic wool of different thickness, colour and texture, and metal lampshade frame.

Tablemat & Lampshade

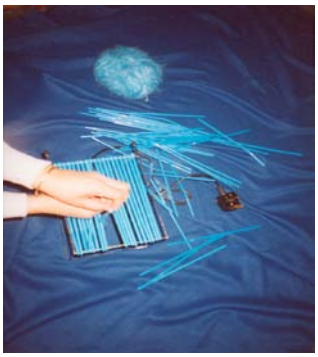
Topham, 1982:40

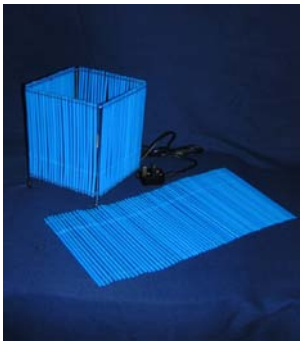
L. Salaghor





Pearson, 1984:16





Photographs, L. Salaghor

Plate 41.1

Refers to previous plate. Details of constriction of the fourth artefact.

Plate 42, Framed weaving, 2004. L. Salaghor.

Size: 71 × 52cm.

Materials used: Strips of cloth**,** synthetic yarns of different colour and textures such as boucle, hairy yarns, and wooden frame.

Framed Weaving

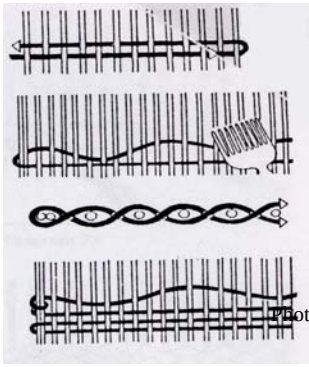


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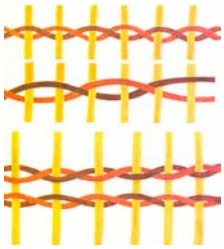
Plate 43, Partition**,** 2005. L. Salaghor.

Size: Each section of clothes airer measured 51× 109 cm.

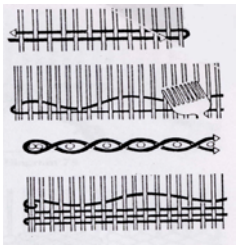
Material used: Plastic stripes, synthetic wool threads of different colour and texture, metal wire and clothes airer.

Partition

Pearson, 1984:16

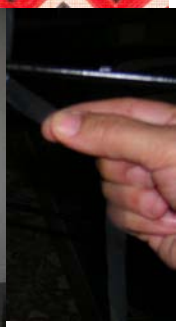


Peeg, 1986:61



L. Salaghor

L. Salaghor



Photographs, L. Salaghor

Plate 43.1

Refers to previous plate. Details construction of the sixth artefact.

Photograph, L. Salaghor

Plate 44, Wall hanging consists of three panels, 2005. L. Salaghor.

Size: The large panel is measured 72 × 105 cm. The size of the small one is 31× 105 cm.

Materials Used: Plastic stripes, synthetic threads and wooden frame.

Wall Hanging

L. Salaghor

Peeg, 1986, 61

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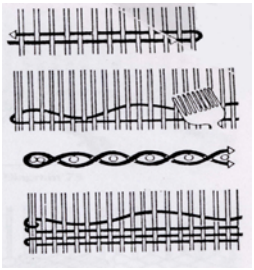


of the

Photographs, L. Salaghor

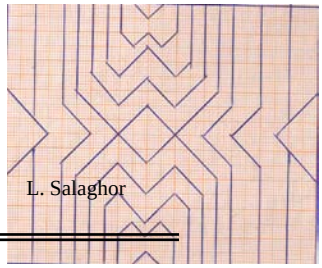
Plate 45, Wall hanging, 2006. L. Salaghor.

Size: 95 × 87cm.

Materials Used: Magazine papers, beads and synthetic threads of different colour.

Wall Hanging

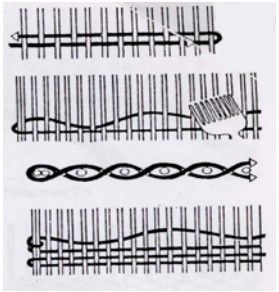
Topham, 1982:36



L. Salaghor

L. Salaghor

Pearson, 1984:16



Peeg, 1986:61

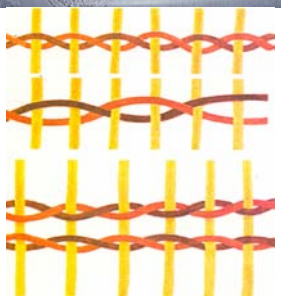


Plate 45.1

Photographs, L. Salaghor

Refers to previous plate. Details of construction of the eighth artefacts.

Plate 46, Wall hanging**,** 2006. L. Salaghor.

Size: The large wall hanging is measured 55×53cm, whereas the small one is measured 45×45cm.

Materials Used: Beads, synthetic yarns of different texture and colour, and corobuff paper.

Plate 46.1, Lightning, 2006. L. Salaghor.

Size: 35 × 69 × 12cm.

Materials Used: Beads, synthetic yarns of different texture and colour, and corobuff paper.

Wall Hanging & Lightning

Peeg, 1986:61

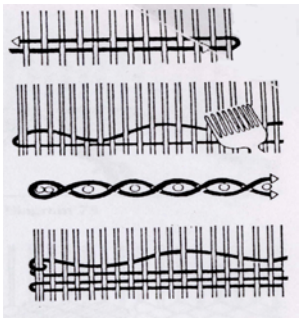


Plate 46.2

Refers to previous plate. Details of construction of ninth artefact.

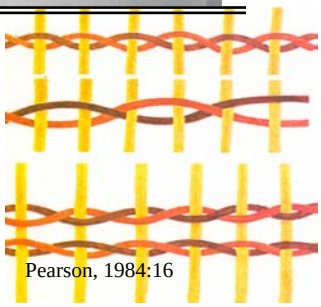
Photographs, L. Salaghor

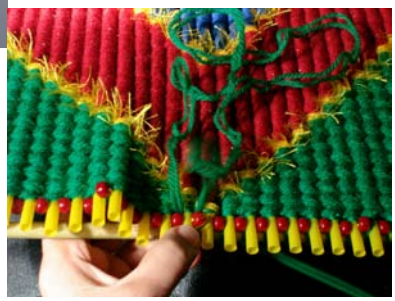
Plate 47, Wall Hanging, 2006. L. Salaghor.

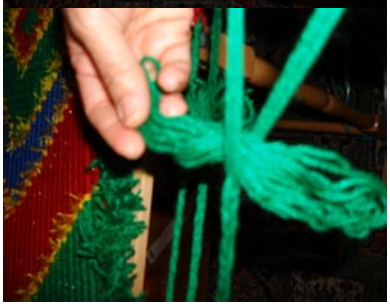
Size: 91×70cm.

Materials: Plastic tubes, beads and synthetic yarns.

Wall Hanging







Photographs, L. Salaghor

Plate 47.1

Refers to previous plate. Details of construction of the tenth artefact.

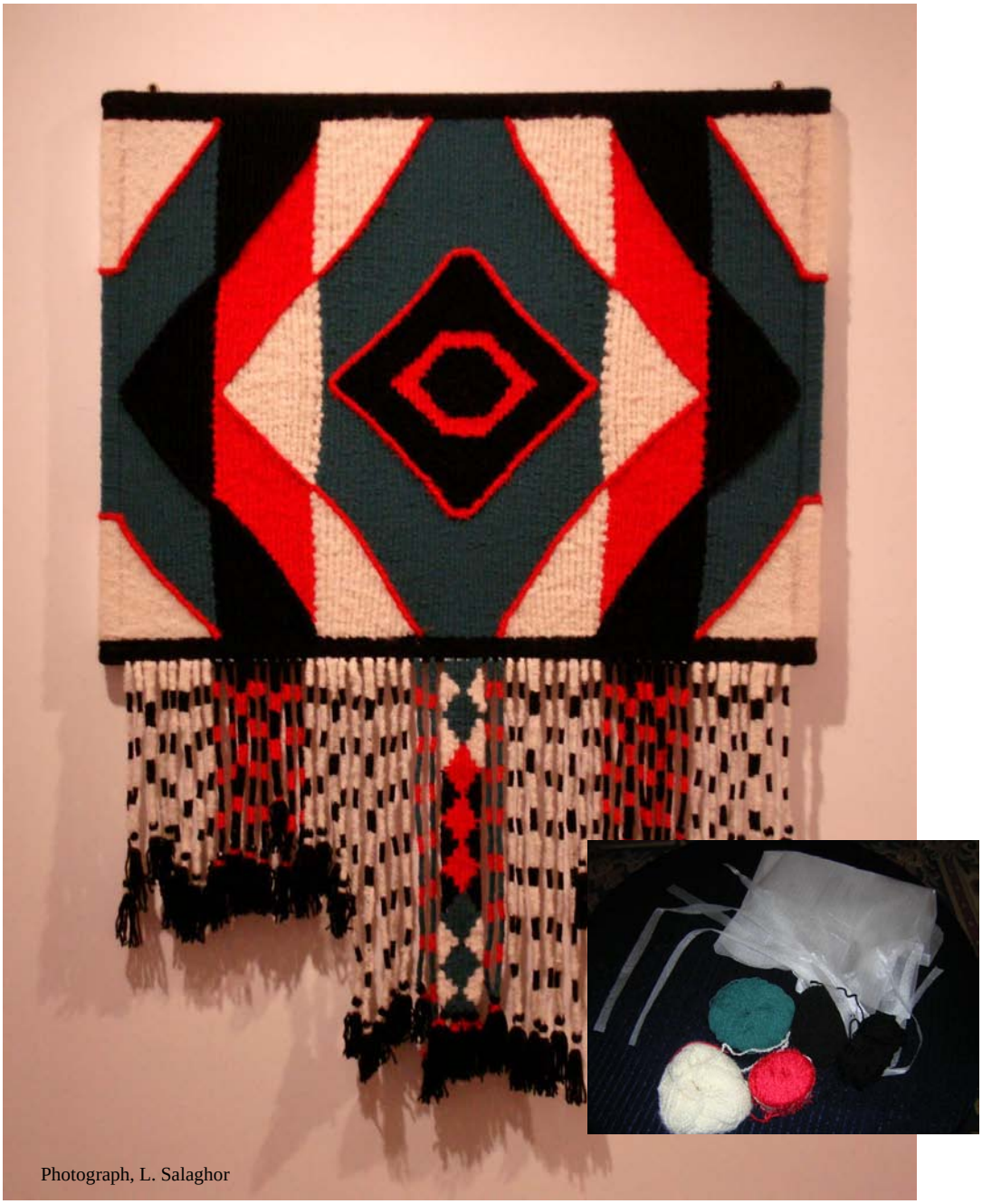


Plate 48, Wall hanging, 2006. L. Salaghor.

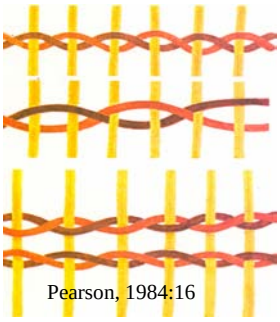
Size: 92 × 72 cm.

Materials Used: Plastic stripes, wooden frame and synthetic yarns of different colour and texture.

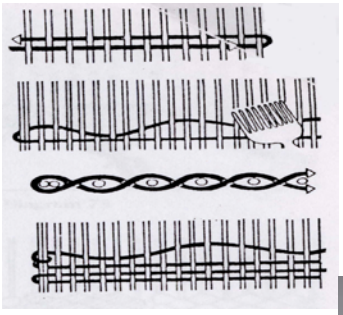
Wall Hanging

Topham, 1982:60

L. Salaghor



Pearson, 1984:16



Peeg, 1986:61

Photograph, L. Salaghor

Plate 48.1

Refers to previous plate. Details of construction of the eleventh artefact.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to create a new form of weaving for a contemporary Saudi audience that is based on traditional forms. Through incorporating Bedouin patterns and juxtaposing them with new and urban materials, it is hoped that a market for those functional and aesthetic works will be stimulated. This would both revitalise a tradition that has nearly been lost, as well as help remind the fractured and urban audience of their roots. The aim of this chapter is to draw out the main threads that have emerged during the research and to emphasise their culture significance.

The original textile or woven productions made by the Bedouin were utilitarian and reflected their nomadic lifestyle. Raw animal fibres such as sheep's wool, goat and camel hair were prepared and spun using simple hand tools and dyed with natural indigenous products. These woven items played a major role in their daily lives because they were light and easy to carry, and could be used in the home, for furniture, storage bags and other domestic accessories. However, this has changed as a result of the industrial revolution and the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s, compounded by the difficulties encountered by the younger generation in practicing this kind of weaving; yarn preparation and the weaving process all demand time and physical effort as explored earlier in Chapter Two. The work of authors such as Topham (1987), Ross (1981), Badour (1996), Nawwab (1995), and Mauger (1991) and the outcomes of interviews with Saudi artisans, revealed that with the changes in lifestyles, the output of traditional Bedouin weavers has declined and that the craft is becoming obsolete.

Events and technological developments have had a negative impact on the nomadic lifestyle of the Bedouin. They have left their dwellings to become an urbanised culture, and have replaced traditional products with imported and manufactured ones that are widely available in different forms, designs and at various prices. Furthermore, the new woven objects that are bought have a closer affinity to fine art than to functional domestic objects. Therefore, woven items created for this new urban audience need to reflect these changes. The new woven artefacts that have been developed through this research not only have decorative or aesthetic purposes, but can also be read as objects that represent cultural processes and forms and which are a reminder of past traditions.

The decorative patterns echo the decoration that links back to the nomadic lifestyle. The simplicity of weave techniques, together with the research conducted with the Bedouin weavers, are documents that preserve the ways of working. Finally, as the artefacts have a new role in urban culture, new materials and forms that are relevant to urban interiors have been developed so that they can be used as accessories that add aesthetic value in public places and that enhance and add pleasure to the domestic setting. This position confirmed what Waller (1979:8) wrote in his book, *Fine Art Weaving*, that woven artefacts have an affinity/unity with architecture. Also, the use of new materials of different colours and textures, together with artistic techniques, makes them suitable for large modern expanses of stone, glass and metal. The use of woven objects in the domestic setting not only makes these more attractive, but reminds the user of Saudi cultural history and of traditions passed from one generation to another that has developed through different cultures or periods.

The new woven items no longer need to be utilitarian, but can be primarily aesthetic. Contemporary weavers can make objects because they enjoy working with the materials. They also have more freedom to choose the forms and build their concepts into fluid, exciting and contemporary work by using selected materials. This means modern weavers or crafts persons have turned their attention to creating statements which can be expressed through the use of materials associated with form, and develop their approaches or adopt new ways of working under pressure from shifts in technology. They do this in order to produce unconventional artefacts that suit present day requirements, in terms of form, design and function. This illustrates the difference between the purposes of woven objects in an urban culture and in the Bedouin context, and also the differences between the kinds of materials used in modern and traditional products, as explored earlier in sections 2.2.2, 2.3, and 2.4

In many ways this emulates the traditional status of weaving. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in western Europe, for instance, woven objects were status symbols amongst the aristocracy. They might show battles and scenes from history and were colourful and decorative. However, these objects also had many practical uses, providing insulation for castle walls, covering openings and affording privacy when hung around beds. Kings and nobles took them on their travels from castle to castle for

reasons of comfort and prestige (Regensteiner, 1986:23). However, today, due to the global availability of images, designs, forms, techniques and new materials, the field of hand weaving in Arab and western countries has shifted and developed. For example, the use of different materials and techniques is one of the implications of modern technology for today's weaver. They can avoid the long and hard procedures of yarn preparation, use complicated looms and special materials and work in large spaces. Through these means, they can produce new and interesting results quickly. In addition to this aspect, previous researchers such as Marshall (1994), Ahmadd (1977), Hassan (1995), and Mahmoud (1995) have exploited the potential for employing synthetic and unconventional materials - sometimes as the weft, or on the surface of woven items after completion - both for aesthetic and decorative purposes, or in order to develop outputs for the textile industry.

The use of contemporary materials have not been limited to the field of weaving, but many artists, painters, and makers of basketry or jewellery have been tempted by the potential of using these materials as a media for constructing artefacts. Also, the use of this kind of material can result in the rapid realisation of artefacts (Regensteiner, 1986, Paine, 2001, Hecht, 2001). However, the use of non-traditional and synthetic materials in Saudi Arabian hand weaving is considered unique, particularly in the traditional Bedouin form of the art.

Alongside these changes, many studies and experiments have been undertaken by researchers in an attempt to develop the field of weaving, whether in Arab or western countries (for example Al-Kauass, 1981, Arafat, 1976, Cocking, 1987, Clark, 1998, Geer, 2003 and Ibrahim, 1996). These studies have produced data that has enriched and enhanced the field in both aesthetic and theoretical terms. From the theoretical point of view, they provide historical and technical information about the field of weaving from different culture and places. Also, the data can be used as a good and beautiful resource or material for research in education and design. By comparison, the literature shows that there is a lack of information relevant to traditional Bedouin weaving and that the present situation is that this form of the craft is poorly identified by current studies.

As a practitioner, the researcher believes that studies and experiments can help the field of hand weaving in Saudi Arabia (particularly the traditional Bedouin form) to evolve, so that parallels may be drawn between Saudi Arabia and other countries with respect to the production of hand-woven products. Jordanian, Egyptian and British weavers, as well as those at Goblein's workshop, have experimented with materials and techniques to produce modern woven artefacts with the aim of reviving and developing their tradition rather than losing it. In addition to the efforts of individuals, there has been institutional backing for these developments, such as the Craft Council of the UK and comparable organisations in India, Jordan and Egypt.

This study falls into the category of reflective practice and the researcher learned a great deal from reflection on the practical elements of the research. Firstly, the practical aspect of this study was improved by the in-depth understanding the researcher gained of traditional Bedouin weaving, particularly its design and weave structures, and also the new and unconventional materials which were essential to the production phase. It was necessary to investigate and look carefully at the original structures, techniques and all circumstances surrounding this kind of weaving, rather than just copying them, in order to reposition these aspects within a contemporary practice. Secondly, whilst the researcher produced her practical works, her knowledge about these grew, which further informed the practical work of this study. She also developed a capacity for advocacy through creative production. Thirdly, the researcher's practical work was developed by applying relevant information to the subject matter, and by the employment of several reflective tools and techniques, such as her sketchbook, which she considered as a sort of visual diary and checklist, as they helped to document and describe the process of the work. A Bedouin weaver, on the other hand, reflects on her work by observing and absorbing her mother's knowledge, but in the end, the product of her labour expresses her own creative personality. Alongside this, the need to contextualise the information gathered about traditional Bedouin techniques, contemporary methods and new and unconventional materials during the practical work, helped to solve the problems that occurred during the process and to avoid repetition of the same mistakes in other parts of the research. In other words, making an artefact based on trial and error is considered an easier approach for a craftsman/woman than listening to an explanation of structure.

This confirms what Dormer (1994) wrote about the process of making artefacts, which discussed earlier in Chapter two, section 2.2.4

The researcher's contribution to new knowledge, both as a researcher and a weaver, is as follows:

- The thesis outlines detailed knowledge about the theory and practice of the construction of Bedouin artefacts, which was not previously available.
- The work offers a reconsideration of the value of these artefacts in the light of contemporary crafts and their place within the global economy.
- This study promotes an appreciation of traditional Saudi weaving, which is informed by the researcher's position as a practitioner and weaver.
- This research allows others to see the potential of such weaving processes, and of artefacts that are based on the use of heritage processes.

Furthermore, the research can be applied in the education of students of weaving because it offers an understanding of how and why these artefacts exist. In addition, students, researchers, weavers, indeed anyone interested in the field of hand weaving, particularly the traditional Bedouin form, might use the information that is relevant to design and weave structures to develop techniques and produce new artefacts.

This research has contributed to knowledge by pointing out the need for investigations of this kind and by making an effort to tackle the lack of information about Saudi traditional weaving. It has provided a new insight into the art and into the structural properties of materials used in the practical work of the study.

In conclusion, this study focused on the development of hand weaving in general and traditional Bedouin weaving in particular in Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to preserve the craft and to open the door for researchers to experiment with new materials and techniques. The literature showed that there was a lack of study and research into Saudi traditional weaving, so this project centred around the consideration of new techniques for reinventing and reviving Saudi traditional weaving in a form that would be relevant to urban dwellers. The development technique was based on the integration of

traditional and new and unconventional materials. In this way, the finished product, resulting from an effective combination of these elements, demonstrated the possibilities for producing modern and aesthetic woven artefacts. By amalgamating the information discovered in this research with Saudi traditional Bedouin techniques, and by using new materials, the field of hand weaving, and particularly the traditional Bedouin form, might be developed and extended.

Having established the potential of the selected materials, and produced woven artefacts, the following outcomes were apparent:

- These materials are comparable to more conventional materials (for example, cotton and wool). This means 'they are similar to conventional material'.
- The new materials were fast and easy to work with.
- An important discovery of this research was that different kinds of material can easily be used as alternatives for the warp when weaving.
- It was difficult to locate Bedouin weavers during this research, so a website containing knowledge about Bedouin and Arab contemporary weavers, their dwellings and workshops, could be constructed as the basis of an archive. This would serve as a knowledge base for further research.

Further to the research discussed in this thesis, a great deal of additional experimental work could be undertaken, as follows:

- More effort could be spent on the study of Saudi traditional Bedouin weaving. At the present time it is understood that no adequate studies have led to the preservation of knowledge about this kind of craft, in terms of its weave process, techniques and products. Research into this area will help to develop the field of hand weaving and enable new woven artefacts to be devised.
- A great deal of interesting work could be carried out on the variety of visual effects which could be achieved by using unconventional materials of different kinds and thicknesses for the warp and the weft. The application of these types of materials could be taught at various levels in education.
- The support programmes adopted by the thriving hand weaving craft sectors in countries such as Jordan, Egypt, India and Pakistan could be implemented in Saudi

Arabia to develop and promote the Saudi craft industry. Through these programmes, weavers would spin and weave for foreign and local/internal markets.

- Disregarding the boundaries between the different fields of fine and applied art and blending them together could lead to a greater variety of outcomes for artists and enable innovation in artistic works. Weavers could develop their work and find sources of inspiration in traditional pieces of embroidery, painting, sculpture and patterns or ornamentations of Islamic or other cultures. There is more to be learnt from studying the patterns, colours and textures of these sources.
- Finally, the establishment of annual exhibitions and workshops of weaving or tapestry, in cooperation with the Saudi Agency of Arts and Cultures, could help to promote woven artefacts in Saudi society.

Ultimately, the researcher would like to say that working on such a project and studying in a different culture has been interesting. The five years taken to complete the research have been personally enlightening. During this period, the researcher has experienced feelings of excitement, disappointment, anxiety and reassurance, whilst being faced with the difficulties of adapting to the various approaches and concepts of the research methodology, particularly those of the contextualisation of knowledge and reflection in action and practice. Eventually, the practical work was pleasurable and the researcher learned through trial, error and failure, whilst building both the theoretical and practical elements of the body of work, and through these, hopefully revealed some of the essential values of traditional Bedouin weaving in Saudi Arabia.

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APPENDIX A: THE ORIGIN AND TREATMENT OF RAW MATERIALS USED IN TRADITIONAL BEDOUIN WEAVING

A.1 Introduction

Mauger (1991:32) wrote about the raw materials used in the production of traditional Bedouin weaving. Whilst in the desert, a pastoral existence was the only possible way of life for the Bedouins. They adapted to live with little, because the pastures were their homeland and tending the herds was their job. They learnt to make the objects they needed from those minimal resources which were immediately available, such as animal fibres and natural plant dyes.

From interviews with Bedouin women weavers in the cities of Makkah and Al-Taif, in western Saudi Arabia, the researcher discovered that the most common raw materials used in Bedouin weaving are wool, goat and camel hair. Sometimes silk and metallic threads are used to make more delicate objects (personal communication. September, 2003). Hecht (1989:65), refers to the fibres used in Bedouin weaving, confirming that the fibres are usually obtained from their own animals, and include goat and camel hair and sheep's wool, whilst cotton is traditionally imported from India and Egypt and bought in markets

A.2 Types of Fibres

The types of fibres are discussed by Hecht (1989), Badour (1886), Held (1978) and Hilden (1988). Traditionally, Bedouin women prepared wool or hair yarns for the weaving process using natural wool of different colours or camel and goat hair (Hecht, 1989:65). White materials are prized, because they can be dyed. Due to the lack of water, women in the desert often spin unwashed fleece, directly after polling from the sheep or goat. Settled women, on the other hand, washed the fleece and used carders and a distaff (this will be explained in the following section) for spinning fleece (Baduor, 1996:41).

Bedouin yarns tend to be highly twisted, very elastic, somewhat rough and of medium weight and the weavers employ a large variety of yarns made from fleece, obtainable in a variety of mixed or single natural colours (Baduor, 1996: 43).

Sheep's wool yarns can be found in a great variety of textures and thicknesses and are dyed different colours, including bright reds, oranges, blues and greens (Hilden, 1988:8). The greatest quantity of fleeces can be obtained during the first polling, rather than the second. Wool fibres vary in quantity, quality and colours, according to several factors, including the age, size and breed of the sheep, and the orderliness of the cutting off of the fleeces (Personal communication with Bedouin weaver, 2001). The highest grades are taken from the shoulder, as this area gives the finest wool, while stained areas of the fleece are considered to be of the lowest quality. White wool and the heaviest yield of fibres can be produced from the head, neck and dewlap area, yellow is found at the tail, and the coarsest and longest fibres are taken from the hindquarters (Personal communication with Bedouin weaver, 2003). The beasts are fleeced of their wool at the end of spring using scissors or hand shears, but goat hair is usually cut in a downward movement using a knife. The way of obtaining fibres from the camel is different to the way in which it is collected from the sheep or goat. The Bedouin pluck or comb the wool and hair from the camel, but sometimes a follower at the rear of the caravan trail picks up the camel's wool and hair off the ground (Hecht, 1989:65). Bedouin prefer to shear fleece before slaying their sheep. This is believed to prevent the wool from being attacked by moths. A woollen fleece has several characteristics:

- A high degree of elasticity.
- A high degree of curliness or crimp.
- Produces good quality felt.
- Low flammability.
- It is an absorbent material.
- It generates heat when it absorbs water vapour.

Bedouin women prepare woollen yarns as follows. They sort the fleeces into different grades of quality and then clean it, removing thorns, burrs and insects. After initial

preparation, the fleece must pass through several processes before it is ready for use as a yarn (Hecht, 1989:67), including:

- Washing several times with soapy water.
- A final rinse, after which the fleeces are unrolled for drying.
- Teasing fleeces to expose separate locks. Having gathered a small quantity of the fleece, it is taken lightly between the fingertips, and drawn out and then placed together many times until it lies parallel.
- The fleeces are cleaned by beating them strongly with palm branches of about three feet in length. This process is repeated for about twenty minutes, during which a pile of sand and plant matter drops to the floor. The fleece is moved into a different orientation during this process. This process not only cleans the fleece, but also fluffs it up.
- The fleeces are spun in preparation for dyeing.

Goat hair is the strongest fibre and is best for making tents, as its black colour absorbs the heat. It is occasionally used in other pieces. It comes in a surprising array of natural colours and degrees of twist. Goat hair does not undergo the procedure of washing, carding and combing as for sheep's wool, but it is directly spun after being sorted and has sheep's wool added to make it easier to spin (Badour, 1996:95).

Camel hair is hardly ever used because it lacks the strength of other fibres. It is a softer and weaker fibre that is hard to spin and therefore it is rarely found in Bedouin weaving. Camel hair can be found in dark, light and brown shades. It is not washed or combed but it is teased with the fingers until smooth, and then spun in the same way as sheep's wool (Hecht, 1989:65).

White cotton is spun and plied by using a hand spindle. This kind of material is used in Bedouin weaving because of its sparkling whiteness. Sometimes women miss out the spinning process and simply work white cotton twine. The bottom strip of a dividing curtain in a tent is often made of heavy white cotton, woven in the same way as the other strips in the piece (Hilden, 1988:8).

The yarns used in Bedouin weaving come in different thicknesses and textures: soft or prickly, or even lumpy. It is wound onto balls ready for plying and for use as warps (Badour, 1996:52).

A.3 General Preparation Techniques

There are several stages of preparation which are common to all fibres when producing threads for weaving. These steps include carding, spinning and dyeing, all of which are described below.

- **Carding**

To produce good quality yarn, teased fleece must be carded. Carding arranges the fibres within a piece into basic alignment to enable them to be spun evenly without tough knots arising.

The most common method is to use two carding combs or '*Kirdash'*, small wooden boards, which are rectangular in shape. These two cards are covered with rows of long nails, each card having a handle (Plates 1 & 2; Badour, 1996:48 and Held, 1978:258).

The fleece is dragged through the teeth between the two cards, which rest on the knees. The upper card, with the handle on the left hand side, rests on the lower one, with its handle on the right hand side (Plate 3). Small pieces of fleece are spread and teased onto one of these combs. The other comb is drawn across the fleece, with the handles grasped firmly, so that the nails of the two combs are pressed close together. This process is repeated several times until the fleece becomes soft and fluffy across the whole surface and most of the individual fibres are lying in the same direction (Held, 1978:261).

- **Spinning**

Spinning fleece is one step in the long process of weaving. This step allows the wool to be transmuted into a regular length of yarn for weaving. Women and children usually spin the yarns using a spindle, which can be made at any time and from the simple material at hand, especially when tending flocks or travelling. Sometimes, men twist camel's hair by hand and it is fixed onto a stick to be ready to use for weaving (Hecht, 1989:65). Once the fibres have been carded, the fleece wool is rolled up into small masses and attached to a distaff or *Tighazallah* (Plates 4). This is usually a long, round wooden stick, or palm branch split halfway down, and is usually tucked under the left armpit and supported by the left arm during the spinning process.

The spindle or *Mighzil* is used to spin and store the thread and is generally 12-18 inches long. It can be made from anything which is to hand, such as a wooden stick, a coat hanger, a piece of plastic or a metal plate (Hecht, 1989:65). There are two kinds of spindle; commercial ones with a whorl of two thick cross pieces with a bent nail at the top (Plate 5), and hand made ones having one whorl with a hook at the top of the shaft (Plate 6; Al-Essaa, 1998:35).

To spin the fibres, the spinner places the distaff with the fibres attached to it under her left arm or in a hole in a concrete block. She takes the top of the spindle in her right hand in a slanting movement and lays it in her open palm, with the head of the spindle pointing to her left. She slowly feeds out more fibres from the distaff into the twisting yarns with her left hand, at the same time turning the spindle away from her body, against her thigh with her right hand. In this way, the spindle is always spun to the right (Plate 7). Spinners imitate their mothers when using this method. A small number of Bedouin women spin in a sitting position. However, spinning is still mostly carried out by women while walking, talking, minding sheep or during off-duty hours (Badour, 1996:67).

This spinning position enables the worker to sit comfortably. The use of drop spindles requires standing, and twirling the shaft between finger and thumb (Plate 8), or by a

quick movement up the thigh before dropping the spindle, so that it rotates freely. The spindle is held palm up or down in order to make S-spun yarn, which is a left hand twist (Hecht, 1989:65). The spinner usually rolls the spindle from the thigh to the knee in the opposite direction to 'Z' spun yarns. A Z-spun yarn is produced by rotating the spindle in a clockwise direction while the spindle rolls from the knee to the thigh (Hecht, 1989:65) (See plate 9).

Once the yarns are spun and rolled up into balls, they are plied to ply two yarns together. Ply processes take the opposite direction to the single threads, turning the shaft of the spindle on the thigh with the palm, the free hand directing two yarns from separate balls. The same spindle as used in spinning, but of a different size, can be used in the ply process. Being larger, it can hold more threads (Hecht, 1989:65).

- **Dyeing**

Commonly, women dye the yarns either for their own use or to sell, because there are no dyeing and spinning industries for Bedouin weavers. They learn to colour their yarns after they complete the process of spinning. The dyes usually come from plants or, if the weaver wants to create a less subtle colour, from commercial sources. Even though commercial dyes are foolproof, faster and the colours more brilliant, they are expensive and the people who live in mountain areas can not always access them (Hilden, 1988:9). The mountain people have limited resources and make use of everything at hand, and therefore prefer to use dye-producing plants. For example:

- Bisham tree bark for red.
- Henna for orange.
- Sidr tree bark for green.
- Irn tree bark for black.
- Onion for golden yellow.

A few natural dyes are still in use and can be found in the local suqe/market. These include leaves, roots, the stalks and petals of indigenous plants, dried lime, henna and 'gursh roman' or *pomegranate skins*. These natural materials are dried and crushed to

form a powder. Various natural and powdered commercial dyes are imported from India, Kuwait and other Arab countries. Examples are turmeric, kurkum, madder or fuwa, kermes-crimson, cochineal and Alum (shabba), which is used as a mordant to fix the dye, and is available by the kilo in large crystals (personal communication with Bedouin weavers, 2001).

The dyeing of threads commences after the yarns have been spun, washed with washing powder and draped over a wall to dry. Before the yarns are processed, they should be wound and made up into skeins for easier handling. The skeins are tied loosely in at least four places, with the beginning and tag end of the yarn tied together. Usually, fleeces are completed in comparatively small quantities (Hecht,1989:67). Uncovered dyeing equipment, such as a propane burner and a metal cooking pot, are used. The dye is heated over a wood fire, using a small amount of water and a large amount of yarn. Many dyes require a few minutes of such heating if commercial dyes are used, but plant dyeing requires at least one and a half hours, depending on the depth of colour desired. To obtain a strong colour, the yarns should be dipped and dried three times. This procedure, including the mordanting, takes anything up to one week, whereas colour from a chemical dye can be obtained in a few hours (personal communication with Bedouin weaver called Oum Addel, 2003).

A large skein of spun and plied white yarns is immersed in the dye bath until the pot is full to over flowing. After five minutes of boiling, the white yarn is removed and replaced with a grey skein. The reason for dyeing the light yarns and then the dark is that weavers have grown up seeing their mothers do this (Personal communication with Bedouin weavers, 2003).

A.4 Tools Used for Traditional Weaving

Traditional weaving techniques and decorative patterns were passed from one generation to another. Many different patterns have arisen from the Bedouin context and reflect the high artistic skill and ability of the people (Badour, 1996). Because of the hardship experienced in Bedouin society, the people depended on themselves for

everything, including the making of yarns and the tools employed in weaving, which where usually made of readily available materials (Personal communication with Bedouin weaver in Al-Shafa area, west Saudi Arabia). Bedouin weavers use special tools for weaving. These are:

1. The ground loom called *natu, al-sadou* or *marathon*. A ground loom is about 9.8 feet long by 1.6 feet (or 150 cm) wide. This width is comfortable for the weaver to put together. The loom is very simple and easy to disassemble if the family unit moves on before a piece is finished (Hecht, 1989:61). It consists of two rods of wood or metal used as front and back beams. These two rods are fixed behind pegs driven into the ground and lashed to them. The two beams are needed to hold the warp under tension during the weaving process. The length of the finished weaving determines the distance between the two rods and the width of the warp. The heddle bar is made from a stick or dowel and is supported on either side of the stretched-out warp by two bricks, cans, rocks or forked wooden stakes (Hecht, 1989:61) (See plate 10). Attaching the ground loom warps requires two or three women and takes several hours. Two women sit, one at each end facing each other, and a woman or girl runs back and forth between them, unwinding a ball of warp yarn. The process usually starts by tensioning the beams against four stakes in the ground, with the warp stretched tightly between them in a figure of eight to keep the yarns in order. The warps must be arranged as close together as possible. The weaver positions the heddle rod on petrol cans, a concrete block, rocks, a cushion or forked wooden stick buried in the ground (Hecht, 1989:64). Heddles are loops of thread wound around a wooden rod placed across the warp to hold different sets of yarn in place, allowing the other set to be lifted or pushed down. This makes the shed, or opening, into which the crosswise or weft yarn is inserted (Badour, 1996:63). The length and width of the loom depends on the desired size of the object. When the weaver reaches the point where it is difficult to access the warp threads and make the shed during the weaving progress, she changes her position and sits on the part she has just woven to reach the part she now requires. At the same time, the heddle and its supports must be moved along the warp as the weaver works (Hecht, 1989:61).
2. The *menssagah* or sword beater, is a heavy tool made of flat wood, pointed and bevelled on both ends, 75 cm long and 75 mm in diameter. It is used during weaving

to adjust the tension in the warp. This is achieved by sliding the stick under the warps and then tightening them by turning the flat side vertical (Plate 11) (Badour, 1996:67).

3. The *madrah* or hook beater, also called *gharn* or horn, is made of steel, gazelle or goat horn, fixed into a wooden handle (Plate 12). The weaver uses it to open up the shed to its maximum to separate warps that stick together (Badour, 1996:67).

4. The *maishaa* or stick shuttle is a simple narrow stick, 20cm long, used to wind the weft during the weaving process. The weaver inserts the weft into the opening created by the sword beater (Plate 13) (Hecht, 1998:68).

Appendix A: Plates

THE FOLLOWING PLATES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

APPENDIX B: CHANGING BEDOUIN LIFESTYLE IN SAUDI ARABIA

B.1 Introduction

The lifestyle of the Bedouin was influenced by the discovery of oil and the industrial revolution in Saudi Arabia. Changes took place in both the field of arts and crafts and in the Bedouin way of life. In many cases their accommodation, costume, habits and tradition have shifted, as described below, in order for them to adapt to the new situation.

B.2 Dwellings

- **Tent (also known as the house of hair or *beit issha'ar*)**

With industrialisation and increased communication, it was no longer necessary for the Bedouin to live in tents which were adapted to the climate and the nomadic way of life (Plate 14).

The size and width of tents varied from tribe to tribe and from region to region, and reflected the importance of the owner (Hecht, 1989:59). The average house of hair is made up of three sections, marked out by a row of poles. Traditionally, the roof, walls and back of a tent are warp-faced and made of black hand-spun goat hair or dark sheep's wool in long strips which are sewn together. The tent roof can be 10 to 40 feet (3-12 m) long and 75 inches in width (Hecht, 1989:59). The interior dividing curtain (called a *qata* or saha*)* was woven in many colours and patterns, and made of sheep's wool in long strips of about 20-5 feet in width and six or seven feet high, joined together using blanket stitch. These interior tent walls were usually used to separate the men from the women's section, at the same time as giving the women privacy for working and entertaining. A *qata* or saha is the most highly decorative house of hair and reflects the women's skills in weaving. It has several names, depending on the nomadic tribe it belongs to, including *Al-Saniaah, Al-Okumm, Al-Girarah, and Al-Gattia.* The name *Al-Saniaah* is given to an undecorated tent wall in which bands of pattern only

appear around the edges (Personal communication with Bedouin weavers, 2003). A *beit of issha'ar*, or house of hair, usually includes three sections (Plate 15):

1. The men's section or the *majlis*. Its sides are covered with long strips and ornamented flat weave rugs and cushions are laid out inside. It is also lined with pack-saddles for riding camels, covered with saddlebags or galyaks, for guests to lean on. The woven objects were worked by the women of the family. Guns, swords, weapons, and in some tents, tribal musical instruments called rebecks (*Al-Ribabah)* were attached or hung on the tent poles for decorative purposes (Al-Essaa, 1998:16).

2. The floor of the women's space was covered with rugs and a large quantity of carpets, blankets and bags was accumulated against the porch rugs. This section also contained large bags called *Idle* for the storage of food, clothes and other household goods, wooden boxes in which to keep valuable items and toilet materials, and cots, made of leather and carried on the shoulders or made of palm leaves and hung in the women's space. A ground loom (called *natu* or *marathon*) would be laid at the front of the women's quarters for weaving (Al-Essaa, 1998:16).

3. The kitchen is used for cooking utensils including a kettle, cooker, plates, tins, a quern used for crushing grain and pots for storing butter (Al-Essaa, 1998:16).

- **The Hut (also known as the *ushshash*)**

In the past, reed and branch huts were known variously as *ushshash*. Today, some nomads live part of the time in town, and the rest of the time in huts built with palm leaves and boards (Plate 16). They are located on the urban outskirts and used to raise live stock and chickens.

Sometimes, the huts are made from palm leaves covered with dried grasses and surrounded by other huts arranged to enclose a small courtyard. Previously, each family built two huts surrounded by a wall of boughs and palm leaves. The courtyard had two entrances, one at the front for men, and the other to the rear for women. The water closet and barn occupy a corner inside the court. The floor of the hut is covered with rugs made of palm leaves or sheep's wool sewn together, the edges being lined with leather cushions filled with palm fibres. Blankets (or *shamllah)* are made of sheep's

wool or camel hair to protect the occupants from could weather in winter (Badour, 1996:25).

- **The Saltbox**

In the past, before nomads moved to urban areas, they also lived in dwellings known as saltboxes. These were box-shaped constructions with either a conical roof of sheet iron or a flat tin sheet (Plate 17). The floor was covered with the same rugs and cushions used in tents and huts (Badour, 1996:27).

- **Argillaceous (A house build of mud and haulm)**

The interior design and content of an argillaceous house are similar to those of a tent. However, in the house there are shelves, a window in the southern wall for air circulation and outside is a sandy courtyard surrounded with a wall of about 1.4 to 1.7 meters in height, with two separate entrances for men and women (Plate 18). The courtyard has a special place for entertaining guests in the evening. This is furnished with flat rugs and cushions. Additionally, a palm tree is usually grown in the courtyard to give shadow during the day and to yield products including dates, palm leaves and fibres. The occupant usually raises sheep, goats and chickens inside and outside the courtyard (Kuttob- Kanah & Al-Kulle, 1989:69).

- **The Concrete House**

In recent years, many Bedouin have moved out of the desert to live in villages and towns. They now live in concrete houses, or villas, with open-walled courtyards (Plate 19). Many of them go to the desert at the weekend. Typically, families have a large tent inside the courtyard for pleasure and leisure.

In spite of the use of modern building materials, the houses preserve tradition characteristics, being comprised of one floor divided into two or three rooms, together with a kitchen and bathroom. Ceilings are built from board to reduce the heat inside the house. The sitting room floor is covered with carpets of different kinds, reflecting the economic status of the occupiers, and is bordered with cushions. Bedroom floors are

usually covered with carpets made of cotton, with a sponge or cotton mattress placed on them for sleeping. The kitchen usually includes a cooker, contemporary cooking utensils and food stuffs (Badour, 1996:29). Houses in urban cities are more diverse than those in villages, in terms of design and furnishing, and are characterised by modern and western styles.

THE FOLLOWING PLATES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Plate 14, Bedouin tent or "house of hair". Hecht, 1989:58.

Plate 15, Sections of *Beit issha'ar*/house of hair. **Al-Essaa, 1998:17.**

Plate 16, The hut/*Ushshash.* Badour, 1996:26.

Plate 17, Saltbox, 2003. L. Salaghor

THE FOLLOWING PLATES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Plate 18, An argillaceous house, 2003. In Wadi Lea village at Al-Taif city.

Plate 19, The concrete house, 2003. In Al-Shaffa village at Al-Taif city.

APPENDIX C: REPORT ON INTERVIEWS WITH EGYPTIAN, JORDANIAN, AND BRITISH TAPESTRY WEAVERS

C.1 Introduction

The current study aims to produce woven artefacts related to an investigation of weave structures, decorative patterns and the colour of traditional weaving of the western region of Saudi Arabia. It also looks at the utilisation of unconventional and new materials for the warps and synthetic yarns for the wefts, in order to experiment with and assess their suitability and relevance in updating woven products.

From a technical viewpoint, it was necessary to: adopt a studying method to study the works of contemporary tapestry weavers which are relevant to the present project, to understand the basic structures of traditional weaving techniques and the materials used in Bedouin artifacts, and to appreciate the ways in which modernity has influenced their work.

C.2 Methodology and Sample

As a consequence of a needs study used to build up the practical aspect of this study, a number of semi-structured interviews with Arab and British tapestry weavers were established during summer 2003 and winter 2005. Questions about materials, techniques and designs were asked in the interviews and photographic and tape-recorded records were made.

British weavers were contacted after obtaining a list of their names and addresses from Textile House in Brighton and the Crafts Council. A number of institutions, which had an interest in weaving and links with Jordanian weavers were contacted and a list of their names and addresses was obtained. On visiting the Department of Textiles at the University of Helwan, a number of Egyptian weavers were met. Interviews with Jordanian and Egyptian weavers took place between May and August 2003. Interviews were established at home, at the weaver's workshops or at public exhibitions.

Egyptian and Jordanian weavers were selected because they have a similar culture to Saudi Arabia and many studies have been done in the field of weaving, particularly in Egypt. They were also selected because of their proximity to Saudi Arabia; bordering the east and the north. British weavers were chosen because the researcher was studying in the UK, it has different culture and much experience in the field of hand weaving.

Brighton holds a two week annual festival in May. It includes many activities, such as a cycle race, 'Mini' car show, circus and various entertainments from other countries. Open House of Brighton Festival was one of these activities. Artists opened their houses or workshops to the public in order to exhibit and sell their works.

Through this festival, interviews with two British weavers were undertaken, Katy (75), and Amanda Armstrong King (47). The interviews were conducted in their workshops.

Margaret Ailing, one of the tapestry weavers whose names were obtained from The Textile House in Brighton, invited the researcher to visit the Art in Action event. This is an annual event held over four days, from 17th to 20th July in 2003, and was organised by the Art Department of the Fellowship of the School of Economic Science. The students of the School of Economic Science work as volunteers. They worked to service, arrange, and provide everything as much as possible to all visitors and participants during these four days. The researcher attended Art in Action, where she interviewed Margaret Ailing and Jacqueline James. Photographic records of the artefacts were made and the questions were given to them to answer later, because they were involved with visitors.

Based on the list of weaver's names, which were obtained from the Craft Council, Helen Maryo was interviewed in Manchester, Fiona Banford in Birmingham and the work of Sue Lawty was viewed at the V&Q museum. Thus, the interviews took place in homes and workshops, and photographic records were made.

C.3 Interview Outcomes

Having completed the interviews with British weavers, a number of findings were identified:

- The form of work has become free and modern, and serves aesthetic rather than functional purposes.
- Ideas are derived from different sources, including nature (particularly the landscape), architecture, abstract ideas, paintings, images and geometrical patterns.
- There is individuality in using materials and techniques. For example, we find silk ribbons and hand-dyed wool threads used for weaving, as well as metal threads. Different kinds of natural threads, such as linens, cottons and wools were arranged or blended together, like mixing paint, to be used in weaving. Also, natural materials (leaves, flowers, shells and stones) of different sizes and colours are used. Embroidery techniques and rug knots or macramé are employed to augment the texture and to add aesthetic value to the artefact.

On 25th July 2003, a trip to Egypt for three weeks was made. Interviews with Egyptian tapestry weavers were undertaken for the same purpose as the previous interviews. Five weavers were interviewed, but one of them were selected, Dr. Halah Al-Kawass (67), because her works were relevant to the researcher's practical work in terms of using traditional woven methods and non-traditional material in her artefacts. After the completion of the interviews, it was found that:

- Most contemporary weavers in Egypt are academics, and their works have been produced for aesthetic purposes. The work of Al-Kawass is based on the Lace technique (a kind of traditional needle weaving) and the use of different kinds of materials, including existing items, cellophane paper for the wefts, and cotton and synthetic wool threads of different textures.
- Traditional weaving products, such as 'Kilim' and tapestry/pictorial weaving are produced by craftspeople. Often they are teenagers, poor, illiterate and have been practicing the handicraft since they were children.

- A number of organisations and associations (for example, the Ramses Wesaa' institution, established in 1952 in the Al-Haraniah area of Cairo) are interested in teenagers learning and practicing weaving craft.

Having interviewed the Egyptian weavers, a two week trip was made to Jordan on 20th August 2003, with the same aim as the trip to Egypt. The researcher commenced the programme of gathering information by visiting a number of organisations which had links with and an interest in weavers, as follows:

- Bani Hamida Weaving Project. The 'Bani Hamida' is an area near Madaba village, located 70 km north of Amman City. At the Bani Hamida Project, the researcher met two female weavers who explained the whole process of weaving, from receiving the design to producing the finished article. From this visit the researcher found that:
    - Raw materials, such as sheep's wool, are used for producing woven objects, adding shells, plastic buttons and pieces of copper or ceramic onto the surface of the weaving after it's completion. Embroidery techniques were also employed in woven objects.
    - Artist weavers concentrate only on design. In other words, they design patterns which suit the form and the function of the weaving. Sometimes, the costumer controls the design by deciding everything related to the piece of weaving, then has the artist weaver or the designer draw it up. After completion, the design is sent to Bedouin weavers with a list of all requirements, such as colour and colour distribution, and the length, width and shape of the weaving. The weaver works on the design without making any changes.
- Jordan Design and Trade Centre, located in Amman City. At this centre, a male weaver called Moffied Jamhour, whose nickname is Abou-Alaa, was encountered. He learned the craft of weaving in this centre and has practiced this kind of craft as a hobby or past time. Abou-Alaa had 9 years experience, produced many artefacts, and participated in many local and international exhibitions. Decorative patterns used in his woven objects are mainly concerned with geometrical and natural shapes obtained from sources such as museums, pottery and ancient artefacts.

- Rimoun Weaving Project. The village of Rimoun is located 10km north of the Roman City of Jarash. Weavers at this foundation follow the same steps as those at the previous centres/foundations, in terms of using raw materials and decorative patterns.

C.4 Summary of Main Findings

This report represents the interviews with British, Egyptian and Jordanian contemporary weavers. Earlier, the researcher explained the goal and method used in the interviews, the way in which the weavers were selected and the outcomes obtained from these meetings.

From these meeting and interviews with British and Arab weavers, it was found that:

- Different techniques are employed in British and Arab woven works, including embroidery, macramé, Ikat, Lace, and rug knotting.
- Most contemporary weavers in Egypt are academics. The situation in Jordan differs to that in Cairo, where weaving matters are left to Bedouin women.
- Although British, Egyptian, and Jordanian weavers were interviewed, five British weaver and two Egyptians were selected because their artefacts were relevant to the researcher's practical work in terms of using traditional weaving and techniques (Ikat, Lace, and geometrical patterns). Although the woven items of Jordanian weavers were made of sheep's wool, they have contemporary appearance in terms of design, using non-traditional materials and embroidery technique.

APPENDIX D: REPORT ON VISITS AND INTERVIEWS WITH BEDOUIN WEAVERS IN THE WESTERN REGION OF SAUDI ARABIA

D.1 Introduction

As the main goal of this study is to produce creative weaving influenced by the traditional work of western Saudi Arabia, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of traditional weaving, its historical background, techniques and methods, tools and materials, weave structures and decorative patterns. Besides information gathered from the literature, interviews were conducted in order to confirm its validity and to gather more knowledge about traditional weaving, particularly weave structure, decorative patterns and colour, as these elements of traditional weaving will be used in the practical work of this study. The research area was chosen because the researcher is a citizen of the western region and worked as a lecturer in the University of Oum Al-Qura in Makkah city, one of the western region cities.

D.2 Methodology and Sample

After visiting Egypt and Jordan, the search for Bedouin weavers commenced in September 2003. The aim of this search was to interview Bedouin weavers and to investigate the elements of traditional weaving. A number of semi-structured interviews with Bedouin weavers were conducted in different places, including their dwellings, villages, Bedouin markets and the historical Showbraa Palace. Questions concerned with information about traditional weaving, its processes and the names of various tools, techniques and decorative patterns were used in interviews, besides photographic records and a tape recorder. The questions were divided into three parts. The first part was concerned with the background of traditional weaving. The second is relevant to weave structures, tools, materials and decorative patterns. The third part is about traditional weaving in the future.

When the researcher started her search for information about Bedouin weaving, it was found it to be a lost art or heritage. This is because industrialisation and improved communications have reached the Bedouin and begun to change their lifestyle. Also, nomadic people have left their dwellings and settled down in the cities, where they can buy cheap rugs, cushions and other items manufactured in the Arab world or imported from the Occident, rather than hand-made items require time and effort in their production. These facts mean that it is no longer necessary for the Bedouin to weave. One sees large amounts of plastic and other manufactured goods in use.

At the beginning, the researcher faced problems in searching for Bedouin weavers because they had moved from their dwellings to the cities. Besides, there is no specific institution or organisation which is interested in or linked to Bedouin weavers. Searching for weavers, however, finally led the researcher to a group of women of various ages and from different villages in the western region of Saudi Arabia. They were:

- *Oum Nasser,* 58 years old, and *Oum Awadd,* 62, whom the researcher met in the Bedouin markets in the city centers of Makkah and Al-Taif.
- *Oum Addel*, a Bedouin weaver in her 40s. A meeting was held in Wadi Lea in Al-Taif city.
- *Oum Khalid*, a woman between 50 and 60 years of age. The meeting was held in Al-Rayan village in Makkah.
- *Hamdah Ahmed*, 55 years old, *Jamilah Al-Suffiany,* 42, and *Mona Al-Suffiany*, 23, whom the researcher met at Ash-Shaffa in Al-Taif city.
- *Oum Mohammed* from the Garwa area of Al-Taif city.

The researcher introduced herself to the participants and explained her interest in Bedouin weaving. They were informed about the purpose of the interview on the subject of traditional weaving and the objective of developing this tradition.

D.3 Interview Outcomes

A number of findings were identified on completing the interviews with the weavers:

- Oum Nasser set up a weave session for the researcher to explain the weft twining method. It has two kinds of weave structure. One of them is similar to single soumak, and the other looks like chain stitch. She had no design drawn beforehand, but worked spontaneously.
- Oum Awaad explained the reason for the disappearance of this kind of weaving as follows:
    - Most of the works were made for use in the weaver's homes, but now they use industrial products instead of traditional ones, which can be found in different shapes and at low prices.
    - Lots of Bedouins settled down in towns and had fewer needs for items they associate with the nomadic lifestyle, and therefore the Bedouin weaving craft is disintegrating rapidly.
- An item made of goat, sheep or camel leather was observed when visiting Oum Addel. This item is similar to African crafts. She explained the technique of preparing leather as follows:
    - First of all, you have to remove the hair from the leather and clean it by scraping it with a knife.
    - To produce red and black dyes, the barks of the Bisham and Irn trees are beaten between two stones and then cooked for three to seven days. Rusted tin cans and shiih or irta leaves can also be used to obtain a dark brown colour.
    - The leather is dye-soaked for three days. After that, it is removed and shaken well, then put back again into the dye bath for a further period of time, maybe three or four days, depending on the depth of colour desired.
- Oum Khalid explored the reasons for using synthetic yarns in her weaving:
    - Acrylic yarns have different characteristics. They can be colourful, cheap and washable, of various shapes and textures and easy to use as substitutes for traditional yarns.
    - Their can also be plied with a hand spindle to strengthen the yarn for difficult weaving processes.
- The method of cutting sheepskin was explained by Oum Addel. Scissors were usually used to cut a whole sheepskin in a circular direction around the hide. This

produces a number of long strips of an inch or half an inch in width. These strips are rolled into balls, ready for braiding, knotting, or weaving.

D.4 Summary of Main Findings

This report represents the interviews with Bedouin weavers in the western region of Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of the report, the goal of the interviews, the methods used, the way the weavers were selected and the outcomes, are explained.
In summary, the following has been discovered:

- The disappearance and obsolescence of this kind of handcraft is related to the discovery of oil in 1930s. Many changes happened in the Bedouin lifestyle, including adjustments to their homes, work and handcrafts and also in the use of industrial products instead of traditional ones (for instance, plastic or leather bags and rugs). Bedouin weavers no longer had a need to produce this kind of weaving and so did not continue with it.
- Some weavers had died, others were aging and could not remember anything about the skills of their craft.
- In different tribes, the techniques, methods and structures of Bedouin weaving are similar.
- All women weavers used the same tools and materials (carding combs/*kirdash*, spindles/*mighzil*, distaff/*gazallah*, ground loom/*natu* or *al-sadou*, sword beaters/*menssagah*, hook beaters/*madrah*, and stick shuttles/*maishaa*). Raw materials obtained from sheep's wool and goat or camel hair were employed in weaving.
- Geometrical patterns were used for decorating woven products. The reason for using these figures is related to the heritage handed down by previous generations. Although weaving was decorated with the same patterns, the names of these patterns differed from one tribe to another. For example, *Ohttaibaa* and *Rayan* weavers named the triangle *minaghiss*, whereas weavers of the *Lea* tribe called the same pattern *haithat*. *Haarith* weavers named the diamond s*hallg* or *kassmah*, but *Bani-Saad* weavers named this pattern *bouggshah*.

- Basic colours of red, green, yellow and blue were used to colour threads. Yarns in natural colours can also be found (black, white and brown). However, the use of dye colours in different tribes is diverse. The majority of weavers dyed their threads using commercial dyes, which were bought from the spice dealer, or sent them to the dye house in the city after the threads had been spun. The approach to using natural dyes (the Henna plant, Bisham tree bark, Sidr tree, Irn tree, and onion skin), also differs between tribes. For example, Lea' weavers did not use the Henna plant for dyeing threads, because it is not colourfast, whereas weavers of Rayaan village used Bisham tree bark and the Al-salam tree in dyeing leather, which is named *Al-Adeem*. Today, Bedouin weavers use some natural dyes for purposes other than wool dyeing. For instance, pomegranate skin is used as a medicine for stomach ailments, and Henna is used for colouring and strengthening hair.
- Bedouin weavers gave their braids names such as *Hamlouz* or *Sabarig.*
- A surprising aspect of all visits was that African crafts, which make great use of leather, have influenced the artefacts of the region. This was because coastal towns, such as Jeddah and Yanbu, are parallel to the Red Sea coast and close to Africa and Egypt.
- Through the knowledge gained from these interviews, new insights were obtained that were not found in the literature. These included the structures used to weave geometrical patterns, the technique of chaining structure, and the technique of bead weaving.

APPENDIX E: Evaluation Checklist

The researcher would like to introduce herself to you as a PhD student from the University of Coventry, School of Art and Design. As her project aims to produce a creative product influenced by the traditional weaving of the western region of Saudi Arabia, using unconventional materials as alternatives for the warp, she has to do a personal experiment to emphasise the suitability of unconventional materials for use as the warp and to produce woven artefacts suitable to present-day requirements. At the same time, the new weave structure might contribute to the development of traditional weaving of Saudi Arabia, and introduce it to Saudi society with a new form, design and appearance.

The researcher would be delighted if you could spare some time to talk together to help her to evaluate her work, but if this is inconvenient perhaps you could answer the following questions. Just mark (×) clearly in the appropriate space.

Article	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Note
The researcher succeeded in exploring the concept of the experiment and attempted to employ the elements of traditional weaving and unconventional materials.				
Weave structures, such as plain-faced weave, twining, and chaining were used successfully to produce woven artefacts.				
Materials employed as alternatives to the warp, including leather, cloth, plastic strips, wooden rods, straws, metal wires, plastic or paper tubes, were successful.				

Choosing yarns for colour and texture had an impact on the researcher's work.				
Using unconventional materials as alternatives to the warp explains the aim of her project.				
Woven objects suit the requirements of modern times, in terms of shape and function.				

The results obtained from the evaluation process will prove the validity and the success of the proposed programme.

APPENDIX F: GLOSSARY

This study contains many idioms. Therefore, operational definitions are presented as follows

Al-Sadou

This term has several definitions. It is the name of a loom consisting of yarns extended along the ground, stretched onto four tent pegs arranged in a rectangular shape (Al-Mathurate Al-Shaabia, 1991:10). Alternatively, most foreigners and Arab authors who write about this type of weaving recognise it as a Bedouin form of the craft. It differs from other weaving types in terms of texture and method because the lengthwise yarn warps are close together and show on the surface of the work and the yarn wefts completely disappear (Badour, 1996:71).

Semi-desert people interpret the term as meaning wool woven, using an inherited traditional method. It implies that a simple primitive loom was employed to weave a variety of colours and forms of Bedouin weaving, to make the most beautiful of traditional pieces (Badour, 1996:71).

Bedouin market "Women's *souq*"

This market is an old style market, where Bedouin women sell different kinds of goods, such as traditional clothes, products made from palm leaves, incense, spices and cooking utensils.

Historical Showbraa Palace

This is located in the Showbraa area of Al-Taif and recognised as one of the important historical palaces of the Hijaze region. It was built outside and to the northeast of the

wall of Al-Taif city. This palace is characterised by a unique architectural style, which combines Islamic with Roman, in accordance with the elements of traditional architecture of the Hijaze region. In 1987, King Fahad ordered that the palace be put under the control of the Ministry of Education, and that it be changed to a museum supervised by the agency of archaeology and museums. Showbraa Museum comprises four halls: the entrance, which shows the political and historical phases of the palace, followed by show halls that explain the culture and history of many periods, from prehistory through Islamic times, and finally the political history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. All these stages are explained through exhibits of the Kingdom's heritage, including different kinds of weapons, clothes, wares and multipurpose tools (Ministry of information, 1998:7).

Sandals (traditional shoes)

This traditional handicraft of Saudi culture is made for men. Camel leather is usually used for making the soles, whereas the softer goatskin is cut into strips for the top section. The leather is tanned or dyed in bright hues, and the design is further enhanced by coloured stitching set across the top. The process of making this kind of traditional shoes is commenced by cutting the sole into the desired size and shape, and then multiple layers of camel hide are stitched together. Several pieces of leather are stitched together in order to form the top section, and are then fastened to the sole. Sandal-making requires not only skill but also strength, because the craftsman needs to push a long pick or needle through several layers of camel hide repeatedly (Aramco Serves Company).

Tradition

Badawi (1991:206) writes, "Tradition is recognised as an important issue in social life and regarded as a part of human civilisation". Tradition encompasses all kinds of expressions, which describe a society or group of people, and have an effect upon them. Knowledge of tradition is considered an intellectual power and a mental process, which helps the group or society to solve its problems (Mursi, 1995:15).

Warp and weft

The warp is a thread that runs lengthwise in a fabric, crossed at right angles by the weft. It also refers to the yarns that run lengthwise on the loom. The warp yarns undergo an extra process of twisting before the weaving process (Jerde, 1992:239). The weft is the thread that runs horizontally across a textile, over and under warp threads (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1768). Also, it refers to the threads in a piece of cloth that are woven across the threads that go from top to bottom (Hill, 1997).

APPENDIX G: MORE EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL BEDOUIN WOVEN ITEMS

THE FOLLOWING PLATES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Appendix G: Plates

APPENDIX H: THE RESEARCHER'S CURRICULUM VITA (CV)

Laila Mohammed Nour Salaghor
Makkah- Saudi Arabia
Email: omibrahim@hotmail.com

Date of birth: 13th February 1956 **Telephone number:** 0096625476553
Nationality: Saudi Arabian **Mobile number:**

Teacher of weaving and printing at Umm Al-Qura University in Saudi Arabia with good relevant work experience, seeking to develop her career in the field of art and design by getting the PhD degree in the field of hand weaving.

EDUCATION AND QUALIIFICATION

2001- 2007	Post graduate studies. PhD in Art and Design/Weaving School of Art and Design Coventry University.
2005	Certificate of Presentation Graphic City and Guilds TBG LEARNING WEST MIDLANDS, Birmingham.
2004	Certificates of Word Processing and Desktop Publishing City and Guilds TBG LEARNING WEST MIDLANDS, Birmingham.
1997	Computer session Society Service Centre Umm Al-Qura University Saudi Arabia, Makkah.
1995	MA (Very Good) Arts/ Weaving and Printing. Umm Al-Qura University Saudi Arabia, Makkah. Master's Dissertation: "**The Creativity in the Field of Tapestries Through Applying the Technique of High and Low Relief".**

1980	BA (Very Good) Art Education Umm Al-Qura University Saudi Arabia. Makkah.
	Final Year Project: Designing and producing wall piece made of ceramic.

WORK EXPERIENCE:

1980-1999	Teaching Assistant, Department of Art Education, Faculty of Education, Makkah- Saudi Arabia.
1995-1998	Deputy Head of Art Education Department, Faculty of Education, Umm Al-Qura University
1990-1992	Saudi Arabia.
1980-1986	

ART EXHIBITIONS:

1984	Supervised the first Exhibition of Art Education Department. Umm Al-Qura University Makkah, Saudi Arabia.
1985	Supervised the Second Exhibition of Art Education Department. Makkah International Hotel Saudi Arabia.
1992	Supervised the Fifth Exhibition of Art Education Department. Umm Al-Qura University Makkah, Saudi Arabia.
1992	An Exhibition of Plastic Art for The Male and Female postgraduate Student of Umm Al-Qura University. Sports Hall Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah.
1992	The Exhibition of Sixty Artists. The House of Plastic Art Hall Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
1993	The Best Artistic Work Exhibition Plastic Art Centre, Jeddah.

1994	The Sixty-one Artists exhibition The House of Plastic Arts Hall Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
1995-1996	Coloured Saudi Airlines Competition, Sponsored by Saudi Arabia Airlines Jeddah city.
1997	The First Personal Exhibition “Thread’s Language” The House of Plastic Artists Hall Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
1998	An Exhibition of Plastic Art for the Male and Female Artist of Makkah Al-Khalidiah Hall Makkah city.
1998	Designed and produced the gift for the guest of honour. Her Royal Majesty Princess Jwhara Bint Al-Braim the president Graduation Ceremony, (Women’s Campus) Umm Al-Qura University.
1998	Designed and achieved the gift for the guest of honour. His Royal prince Sauod Bin Abdul Al-Mohsen Bin Abdul Aziz. The President of the Graduation Ceremony, (Men’s Campus) Umm Al-Qura University Makkah city.
1999	Supervised the sixth exhibition of Art Education Department. Umm Al-Qura University The hall of Makkah Medical Centre Makkah city.
1999	Designed and produced the gift for the guest of honour. Her Royal Majesty Princess Jwhara Bint Al-Braim the president of the Graduation Ceremony. (Women’s Campus) Umm Al-Qura University Makkah, Saudi Arabia.
1999	Makkah Artists Exhibition. Al-Khalidiah Hall Makkah city.

ACTIVITIES

2000	Designed flyer of “Project Week” at UMIST Institution for English language. Manchester city.

2002	participated in annual CSAD postgraduate research conference, Oral Presentation School of Art and Design Coventry University.
2003	Attend the postgraduate research conference Central England University Birmingham city.
2004	Participated in annual CSAD postgraduate research conference, Oral Presentation School of Art and Design Coventry University.
2007	Participated in Research Symposium, Poster Displays Graduate Centre Coventry University.

AWARDS:

Awarded several rewards as well as financial and certificates prizes.